


3 1761 06889091 2

Ontario College of Education  
Library  
University of Toronto

University of Toronto





Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2010 with funding from  
University of Toronto





# INFORMAL EDUCATION

by the same author



IN THE SERVICE OF YOUTH

# INFORMAL EDUCATION;

---

*Adventures and Reflections*

by

J. MACALISTER BREW

FABER AND FABER LTD

24 Russell Square

London

*First published in MCMXVI  
by Faber and Faber Limited  
24 Russell Square London W.C.1  
Printed in Great Britain by  
Purnell and Sons Limited  
Paulton (Somerset) and London  
All rights reserved*



WITHDRAWN  
40001

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My most grateful thanks are due to the British Film Institute and the Library Association Record for permission to use again material which was written primarily for their publications; to the Editor of *John O'London's Weekly* for supplying material which has helped me to clarify my own thoughts on reading methods; to Miss Bowman, Headmistress of the Aylwyn School for Girls, Miss O'Reilly, Headmistress of Peckham Central School, Mr. Beaumont of Failsworth Senior School and many other teachers for their candid views on Parent-Teacher Associations; to Mr. J. H. Higginson for allowing me to see many papers relating to Cressbrooke and the Westmorland Youth groups and Mr. L. Missen, Director of Education for East Suffolk, for similar material; to Dr. Myra Cummings for material on the School Medical Services; to Miss Trout, formerly N.A.G.C. and M.C. Club Organiser in Devon, for permission to use the linking script of a concert performed by Devon Club Members' Council; to Miss Tritton for permission to use again my article "How to Look at Pictures" first written for her club, and for permission to quote from their magazine.

The National Association of Girls' Clubs and Mixed Clubs has kindly allowed me to quote from "Club News" and from reports and articles written originally in the course of my work for that Association.

Lastly, my thanks are due to that large number of Club Leaders, Youth Organisers, teachers and others who have sent me reports, club magazines, etc., who have allowed me to visit their groups and in some cases to experiment with their groups and who have, by sharing their experiences, failures and successes, really written this book for me. There are so many that they cannot be acknowledged by name but that does not mean that I am unmindful of the debt of gratitude I owe to them.

C  
b  
L  
p  
gr  
at  
on  
w  
pr  
sac  
of  
in  
I  
enc  
led  
that

## PREFACE

**A**ddison once wrote: 'It was said of Socrates that he brought philosophy down from heaven to inhabit among men, and I shall be ambitious to have it said of me that I have brought philosophy out of closets and libraries, schools and colleges, to dwell in clubs and assemblies, at the tea-tables and coffee houses.'

In that department of informal education known as Youth Service many people are carrying on in this brave tradition, and this book is concerned with a description of some of these adventures and experiences—and with an attempt to suggest some of the ways in which similar methods might be used in the whole field of leisure-time education. Perhaps nothing will matter more in the next fifty years than the ability of the common man to adapt himself to the changing world—a world in which material prosperity may be just round the corner, but where there are still vast acreages of barren land in the intellectual, emotional and spiritual field.

Of necessity the bulk of my experience has been among the 14-20 age group but occasional excursions into Community Centre work before the war, the many opportunities offered by invitations to help in the educational endeavour of Civil Defence and Service groups during the war, and happy experiences with Parent Associations in Schools and Youth groups, have all given some opportunity to test the validity of many of these methods of approach in adult groups. Moreover, if it is true, as I have invariably found, that the young worker always demands an adult, though entertaining, approach to his leisure-time education, much that has been successful in the field of Youth Service would be equally true of other groups met together to share the joy of adventuring in education.

It is in the hope that these experiences and reflections will encourage those already working on these lines in the knowledge that they are not ploughing a lone furrow—in the hope that perhaps here and there it may suggest a new line of



## PREFACE

approach—in the hope that it will persuade others to help in this work—and lastly in the perhaps over-ambitious hope that it may persuade many more to believe that informal education is an entertainment well worth being taxed for—that this book is written.

# CONTENTS

|   | PAGE |
|---|------|
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS  | 5    |
| PREFACE   | 7    |
| I. WHY FURTHER EDUCATION?   | 11   |
| II. THE APPROACH TO INFORMAL EDUCATION  | 29   |
| III. THE APPROACH THROUGH THE STOMACH   | 47   |
| <i>School Meals and Club Canteens; Poetry in Pubs; the Family Tie; Parents' Associations; School Medical Services; Citizenship and the Stomach</i>                        |      |
| IV. THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEET   | 95   |
| <i>Dancing; Personal Relationships; Health Education; the Open Air; Holiday Problems; Holidays and Education</i>  |      |
| V. THE APPROACH THROUGH THE WORK OF THE HANDS   | 138  |
| <i>Pride in Work; Job Snobbery; Industrial Conditions and Education; Initiation Ceremonies; the Romance of Industry; Work and the Law; Crafts and Co-operative Effort</i> |      |
| VI. THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EYES—1   | 181  |
| <i>The Seeing Eye; Posters and Broadsheets; Wall Newspapers; Exhibition Boxes; Logbooks; Pictures and Painting</i>  |      |

## CONTENTS

PAGE

### VII. THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EYES-2 214

*Mechanical Aids: Lantern; Film Strip; Educational Films; Documentaries; the Commercial Film; Film Groups*

### VIII. THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS 251

*Neglect of the Emotions; Drama; Music; Religion*

### IX. THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS 308

*Radio Listening; Discussion; Books and Libraries*

### USEFUL ADDRESSES 377

### INDEX 379

## WHY FURTHER EDUCATION?

*'Our modern system of popular education . . . has produced a vast population . . . an easy prey to sensation and cheap appeals . . . millions of half-educated and quarter-educated people.'*

—G. M. TREVELYAN: *English Social History*

*'Human progress depends on a double advance—increase in knowledge and the discovery of higher values. We concentrate mainly on the first but the second is far more important.'*

—SIR RICHARD LIVINGSTONE

*'All is flux—nothing is stationary.'*—HERACLITUS

At a time when the whole educational system of this country has been reorganised, perhaps it seems like tilting at windmills to urge the importance of yet more education. The time has come, however, when more education, and above all continued education throughout life, has become not only a matter of individual and social well-being but also a matter of urgency, of self-preservation, an essential indeed for the survival of any type of democratic civilisation—it may be even for the survival of civilisation itself.

The sort of life and the sort of education which would do for a pre-cinema, pre-aeroplane, pre-radio and pre-atomic bomb age will not do any longer. Unless we are to adopt an attitude of predestination towards scientific progress we must make some effort to equip mankind mentally, morally and spiritually for living in such a rapidly changing world. The old system of education was suitable for a static society. 'The rich man in his castle' had one sort of education; 'the poor man at his gate' another. Each was educated to do his duty in that state of society to which he was born, rather than that state of society to which he was 'called' as the Prayer Book more adequately expresses it. Now things are changing so rapidly that we may be born in one state of society, educated for another, and find in adulthood that all has changed yet again.

## WHY FURTHER EDUCATION?

Human knowledge, knowledge of the way in which the mind works, scientific discoveries, methods of transport, have expanded so rapidly that whereas fifty years ago we had to think in terms of a nation, now we have to think in terms of the world. There is nothing to show that this widening of our horizons has reached its limits; and if we are to live intelligently, indeed if we are to continue to exist, we must preserve throughout life such mental agility as will enable us to benefit from the miracles which are almost daily revealed to us, lest these very miracles destroy us. The plain fact is that the tools of living have become mechanical and scientific marvels, and only a few people are of sufficient mental, emotional and spiritual stature to be able to cope with such tools.

Not long ago I was enduring the agony of having my desk and books dusted by one of the finest women I know—a 'daily obliger' by profession and vocation. In an effort to take my mind off the way in which she was making a desolation of my papers and calling it peace, I had switched on the radio to a programme about the marvels of radar. It finished, and she finished, at about the same time. But in order to postpone the horrid moment when I would discover the full havoc wrought by her tidying propensities, I said: 'And what did you think of the Election results?' 'Well, madam,' was the reply, 'I thought it was a very good thing for us working class. But', she added with that genuine concern which is part of her nature, 'I *do* hope they won't take away *all* your savings.' We both have a vote, one each, both equal in that—and she had been muddled by the radio and the press about the implications of the Election results, and I had been muddled by the radio and the press about the implications of yet another scientific marvel. Both of us have equal responsibility in a democratic society, and like everyone else living in a democracy we are ultimately responsible not only for progress, but also for the rate of that progress. Yet both of us (in common with most people) were like children holding dangerous and complicated tools in our hands—tools whose full powers and full implications were entirely beyond us.

There was a time when 'You are out of touch' was an

## WHY FURTHER EDUCATION?

insult which we could hurl at those whose professional work or personalities we disliked—but in a rapidly changing world vast numbers of us are in danger of being not so much ‘out of touch’ as ‘out of gear’ with the world in which we find ourselves.

It is midsummer madness to suggest in these circumstances that the raising of the school age and part-time education up to eighteen is of itself adequate provision for the immensity of our tasks and responsibilities.

It is not only the child and the adolescent, but also the adult, who will need the opportunity, and both direct and indirect encouragement, to examine and assess the continually changing world under the guidance of experts so that they use their minds to the full and are thus able to make up their minds no less freely, but certainly much more intelligently, about the best way in which to live in the modern world.

To have a say in our government is one thing, to use that influence intelligently is another. It is therefore dispiriting to find that numbers of people maintain with obvious relief (since they always have in the back of their minds a genuine fear of authoritarian Youth Movements) that the raising of the school leaving age to sixteen, and the provision of part-time education for everyone up to eighteen, will do away with the necessity for Youth Service. They maintain that if young people are kept in school for a longer period of time they will learn all that they need to know in school, including how to use their leisure wisely. It is still more dispiriting to find that there is very little sense of urgency about adult education in spite of the lesson already learned in that field during the war years. Yet we cannot at one time pay lip service to the fact that education is a lifelong process, and at the same time expect teachers to turn out a completely finished product which can sink or swim on its own at eighteen.

While the world was progressing at a slow and steady pace most people were able, if not to keep in step, at least not to fall too far behind, but now, even when the full effects of the raising of the school leaving age and of part-time education begin to be felt, the provision of further education throughout life will be essential, because everything changes so rapidly.

## WHY FURTHER EDUCATION?

We can no longer afford a situation in which there is more than a degree of cynical truth in the story of the young man who paid a congratulatory visit to an old politician on his birthday.

'I hope you are well, sir,' he said.

'Very well indeed, my boy,' the old man answered. 'I'm eating well, and sleeping well. People tell me my mind's going, but bless you, I don't miss it.'

To be socially adequate in a constantly changing world itself demands a great deal of adaptability and flexibility for continually changing social, economic and vocational problems. The very nature of man's work in this stage of the Industrial Revolution demands these qualities of flexibility and adjustment. If we are to advance, for example, into a society where there will be a greater amount of control of labour, if in fact we are to secure that full employment which is so light-heartedly promised, it will make very heavy demands on the adaptability of that very section of society which is most apt to imagine that its education is completed when its school days are left behind. Flexibility of vocation will press most hardly on the semi-skilled and the unskilled, who will be most subject to variations in the demands for their labour. Henceforward it is not only members of the various professions who will need to keep their minds agile, but also the semi-skilled and unskilled who may need sufficient resilience to re-train several times during the course of their life of employment. Thus continued education becomes a necessity for all.

Furthermore, the very nature of the work which has to be done in the present stage of industrial development will necessitate continual opportunities for education throughout life if man is not to be at the mercy of the machine during both his working hours and his hours of leisure. Whatever else may, or may not, be true about future conditions, one thing is certain, that for the next fifty years or so the number of semi-skilled and unskilled jobs will tend to increase rather than diminish. This means, to put it bluntly, that we are embarking on a programme of educating young people better to do duller jobs. Inevitably many people are not going to find complete self-fulfilment in their work, though they may find self-respect in it. We have a duty to see to it, however,



## WHY FURTHER EDUCATION?

that they are not also spiritually frustrated in their leisure. Secondary education for all does not, and cannot, mean collar and tie jobs for all, since the work of the world must go on, and therefore somebody must do it. On the whole this will matter very little, provided that we can set ourselves firmly to the task of killing the rampant job snobbery which is found in our midst. The realist has known for a very long time, and experience of the war years has confirmed this, that as long as people feel that their work has value and purpose, as long, that is to say, as they can maintain their own self-respect in their work, monotony is not the prime difficulty. In a machine age we cannot (at least until the industrial revolution is still further advanced) eliminate monotony. What we can do, however, is to encourage and foster a pride in all work of whatever kind, if it is well done, and see to it that the conditions under which all work is done are as good as we can make them, and that holidays are adequate and working hours reasonable. This means that we are demanding plenty of leisure for those in monotonous jobs. But leisure of itself is not enough, and may be just as boring as work. We must get accustomed to handling leisure, since it is only of recent years that it has become a problem. It was only two years ago that one of the last of the serfs died, aged 96. She was Mrs. Elizabeth Gordon who had been 'bondaged' at 11 to a ploughman to work from dawn to dark for sixpence a day. Under the bondage system which prevailed less than a hundred years ago in agriculture in Scotland and Northumberland, each cottage on a farm was bound to supply a female outworker. There was no leisure for the average working man a hundred years ago.

The great social reform of the machine age has been this provision of increased leisure for everyone, and the process is by no means completed, but as leisure-time and longer holidays become available (and no-one can do anything but welcome them) the use of this free time becomes a matter of vital concern. We all know that all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy, but too much ill-spent leisure may make Jack a 'doped' boy. We cannot afford a doped democracy in an age of scientific marvels.

## WHY FURTHER EDUCATION?

When the major portion of the average man's life was spent between home, where he ate and slept, and work where he remained for long hours, when he had but little voice in matters of government, what he learnt at play was of little significance. In this age of machinery the leisure time of ordinary people has rapidly increased, and at the same time, as a result of the extension of the franchise, so has his voice, or at all events his potential voice, in matters of government.

Side by side however with increased leisure there has emerged a greater variety of ways in which it can be used. The machine which first of all increases leisure has also been used to fill that leisure: the printing press, the film and the radio between them offer almost limitless opportunities for leisure time recreation and education. Cheap transport, the bicycle and the bus, the motor bicycle and the car, have offered opportunities for travel. The commercialisation of sport, the football pool and the greyhound tracks, have offered increasing opportunities for vicarious adventure.

None of these things is wholly evil, none, indeed could be as bad as some of their opponents would have us believe, but taken in large doses they condition a man's learning along certain lines and therefore influence the whole progress of society. There is thus danger in leisure if it becomes wholly mechanised. Leisure is the gift of machinery, but machinery can equally take back the value of that gift. We must face the fact, that leisure itself is a most dangerous thing if it puts one at the mercy of leisure time pursuits. There is no advantage in being frustrated for less hours at work if one is to be frustrated for more hours in one's leisure time. It is becoming increasingly urgent that we should see to it that people are neither sacrificed to commercialised entertainment on the one hand nor to the demagogue on the other.

Leisure of itself is not enough, and to be well fed and well housed, and to have economic security and adequate medical attention still does not solve the problem of how man may most truly live. Indeed, it is at the very time when life is no longer a mere bread and butter struggle that the problem of living adequately and fully becomes one which the majority of people have time to tackle.

## WHY FURTHER EDUCATION?

When people talk about reform, they usually mean something material. There are those people who imagine that the world would be guaranteed happiness if only everyone had a very high minimum wage and holidays with pay, and a maximum working week of forty hours. There are others who imagine that the beginning of the new Jerusalem lies in better housing for all, or in better health services for all. There are others who cry out that it is security that matters, and that provided people are guaranteed family allowances, adequate health benefits in sickness and old age pensions, life will be a satisfactory business for all. All these methods of achieving the new Jerusalem are doubtless part of the truth, but they are far from the whole truth. No-one would deny that all these material benefits are both just and necessary, and that all these material benefits are well worth working for, but now that so many of them are almost within our reach, now that only the most pessimistic can deny that life is growing better, it may be as well to remind ourselves that in a world of plenty the golden age, for which man must continually strive or die, is probably not so much a golden age of material benefits as of spiritual ones. Man is so constituted that he has to find something to do, with his mind and with his body, and if he is not using them in what the Income Tax returns refer to as 'gainful occupation' he uses them in some other way. Few people will kill time if they can find a way to fill it. And most people find it very difficult to do nothing. Even on our annual holidays most of us work ourselves to death—walking and climbing, swimming and playing games, diving and dancing—living indeed so strenuously that if we were paid to do it, or if it were compulsory, it would be regarded as criminal sweated labour.

After all, what are the most common methods of using one's leisure? They are probably only five in number. One may use one's leisure time, apart from the necessary time for rest and sleep, eating and drinking, in waiting for something to happen, in a state of pure idleness, a state which, on the whole, is far less common than the castigations of the sins of humanity would have us believe. Moreover, we must never forget, in our enthusiasm concerning people's spare time activities, that every

## WHY FURTHER EDUCATION?

man and woman has the right to rest. Everybody who is doing an honest job of work, whether it be monotonous or not, is exposed to a certain amount of exacting routine, and everyone at the end of a working day is a little the worse for wear, either physically, emotionally, mentally or all three. There is a great danger in mistaking rest for idleness, and in imagining that activity is synonymous with action.

Secondly there are those who use their leisure time for enjoyment, those whose life is one long pursuit of pleasure, those unhappy people who think that pleasure necessarily brings happiness.

Next, there are those who use their leisure time in a search for relaxation, relaxation which may involve the exercise of muscles which are cramped during the daytime, or relaxation from intense mental concentration by indulging in various leisure time pursuits which do not call for great efforts of concentration. Consciously or unconsciously, such people try to find in their leisure time what they miss most in their working hours.

Then there are those who spend their leisure time in other forms of work, for their own personal benefit. There is the civil servant who spends his leisure time in writing poetry. There are those young men and women who spend their leisure time in study for various examinations which will qualify them for promotion in their chosen work, or which will qualify them for doing other types of work. Our evening classes and technical colleges are full of young people of this kind, and the postbags of correspondence colleges are weighted by the outpourings of these earnest students. Many thousands of men in England find leisure time activity in gardening—we are a nation, not so much of shopkeepers, as of gardeners. The railwayman cultivates those spare pieces of ground on railway embankments. The miner who has been pit-propping during his working hours finds no relief in propping a door-post in his leisure time, and often he becomes the prop and stay of the W.E.A. class or the University Extension lecture, the bowling club or the football team. One must remember that there is only a very fine line between working for one's own personal profit and working for humanity's benefit. The

## WHY FURTHER EDUCATION?

more well qualified a citizen becomes, the more expert is his potential contribution to the good of mankind. It would be most unfair to suggest that those who occupy their leisure in this way are being entirely selfish, though their motives may to a very great extent be those of personal self-interest.

Lastly, there are those who spend their leisure time in indulging in other forms of work for the benefit of the community. The much maligned town councillor is often an excellent example of the man who spends the whole of his leisure time in voluntary work of this kind. The person who plays for dancing in the church club, the person who 'gives talks' about this and that, those who work for various political organisations, ardent trade unionists, those who give up large proportions of their time to the raising of money for all sorts of good causes, all these are working very hard in their leisure time for the community's well-being. It may be true that they find it ministers to a sense of their own importance, but it is always possible to find a cheap gibe to hurl at those who are in earnest, whether they are in earnest about a new translation of the *Idylls* of Theocritus or the organisation of a whist drive for the organ fund.

There are, however, many who do not know quite what to do with their leisure. The great majority, alas, have not any one great interest. This may be due to a faulty education, or the economic circumstances of their early life, or the fact that they developed late. They either drift from one thing to another in a Micawber-like frame of mind, hoping that something will turn up to relieve the monotony of their lives, or they give up looking, and eventually lose the capacity for being interested. This is what is dangerous, because the preservation of mental agility, emotional poise and adaptability depends upon the ability to retain an alert and interested outlook on life. Man must be given constant opportunity to renew his vision of things as they might be before he can be expected to pull his own weight in the effort needed to translate that vision into reality. In a mechanised world the clarity of one's vision depends to a very large degree on one's ability to use leisure wisely.



## WHY FURTHER EDUCATION?

The nature of a changing world therefore, the nature of work in an industrialised age and the nature of the forces competing for our leisure demand that we shall have continual opportunities throughout life to use our leisure to the best advantage, so that we may live more abundantly. These opportunities are what is meant by further education. In our zeal for education, we often tend to overlook variation of educability on the one hand, and a general fear of education on the other. We are apt to assume in careless generalisations that if only everyone had enough of the right sort of teaching in the right sort of schools in the right sort of buildings, everyone would leave school a finished, and extremely clever, product. This is just not the case. While it is undeniable that most people are a great deal cleverer than they have had any chance to prove themselves under the educational system of the past, the plain fact is that everybody does not possess a first-class academic brain. In the matter of learning in the narrower sense, as in the matter of sex appeal, it is no good blinking the fact that some people 'just haven't got what it takes'. There is a great deal of stark truth in that delightful Narkover film which portrays the oldest boy in the school in a beard and spectacles because he simply could not pass the examinations which would entitle him to leave. At the most optimistic estimate, probably only 25 per cent of the population has predominantly intellectual interests, and it is only to people of such intellectual development and of a relatively high state of culture that ideas and cold reason offer any entertainment value or any relaxation, and therefore any attraction as a leisure time occupation.

There are large numbers of people, and by no means the stupidest, who develop late and who, for various reasons, profit little from their formal schooling. Mr. Winston Churchill is an outstanding example of this type, and such instances could be multiplied from all ranks of society. Many people only wake up to the use and meaning of education long after they leave school, and though with improved and longer schooling the numbers of such people will probably decrease, nevertheless they cannot be ignored or neglected.

Again, although we have little scientific data to go upon, it

## WHY FURTHER EDUCATION?

is becoming increasingly obvious that there is an age limit below which it is profitless to teach certain things. Teachers, in their concern at the brevity of most young people's school-days, have in the past tried to give them a great deal of information about many things long before the age at which they are really ready to grasp such ideas practically as well as theoretically. Much was taught because it was 'now or never' not because 'now' was the best age at which to give such instruction.

Most of us are incapable of grasping the essentials of a problem before we are of an age when it is reasonable to suppose that we may in fact have to grapple with such a problem. We are all a little like the old lady who prefaced her will with the remark 'If I should die, which God forbid'. The result is that much of our teaching of such subjects as Civics, Domestic Science and Parentcraft, to mention only three, is lost long before the young man or woman is faced with filling in a ballot slip, cooking a dinner without supervision, or bathing a baby. In all these subjects teachers do amazingly good work. Domestic science, for example, is probably one of the best-taught subjects in our schools, but Domestic Science teachers themselves are usually the first to admit that partly owing to the nature of the homes in which most of their pupils live, partly owing to their youth, a great deal of what they are taught is forgotten before they are able to put it into practice.

Again ordinary people demand that any education, to which they shall be subjected after their schooldays, shall be like the grave of the mediaeval saint, 'not too narrow, and not too deep'.

The essential differences between the scholars and the ordinary people are, firstly, that there are more of the ordinary people, and secondly that the scholar wants to know more and more about some one or two things, while the ordinary lively, alert, man or woman wants to know a little about everything. After all, only too often those who know a lot understand only a little—whereas the ordinary man who only knows a little can often understand a lot, if he is given a chance to receive further education in a form which he finds acceptable. For the large majority, learning is a social activity,



## WHY FURTHER EDUCATION?

and although numbers of earnest students are content with the intellectual fellowship of the classroom, for the majority of adults a different approach is not only desirable but necessary. Every member of the community does not want a university education and there is no reason why he should. Every member of the community is not suited for it, and there is no reason to be apologetic about this.

For the adult, no less than for the adolescent, there are two methods of educational approach—the first through serious study such as W.E.A. and University Extension groups provide so admirably, and the other through active participation in a variety of social units. ‘Don’t ’ee marry for money, but go where money is,’ said the Yorkshire farmer, advising his son on how to get a wife. In the same way education for the ordinary man has to be taken to where the ordinary man is. The expert has waited too long in his ill-lit and ill-equipped classrooms for people to come to him. We need a sort of ‘highways and byways’ movement in this matter of education. We shall have to take it to the places where people already congregate, to the public house, the licensed club, the dance hall, the library, the places where people feel at home.

After all the public house is the oldest form of community centre we have. It might well be one of the community centres in the town as it very often is still in the country. Indeed one often wonders why villagers who moan that they have no suitable buildings do not alter, renovate and adapt all that vast block of stabling which is often to be found at the back of many a country pub. Already, particularly in the country, the public house is the headquarters of the cricket club, football team, darts league, and skittles association, and in the 1920’s–1930’s even that horror, the modern road house, had evolved a form of social centre which will probably be revived again as cheap motoring becomes a possibility.

That this business of taking education to the public house is not so absurd as it seems, has been proved by a most interesting experiment in informal education which was launched a few years before the war, by the Committee for Verse and Prose recitation, which operated not only in

## WHY FURTHER EDUCATION?

London but in areas differing widely not only geographically, but traditionally and temperamentally, such as Bristol, Nottingham and Manchester. The sponsors of the scheme included two bishops, three brewers and a licensing magistrate as well as the poet laureate and other men and women of distinction and acknowledged literary merit. In spite of those difficulties inherent in any new venture, the scheme was successful enough to make it worth while at the time, and the 'local' certainly deserves consideration as a social unit of adult education. Public house audiences, in Lambeth, Poplar and King's Cross, proved that they 'could take' both plays and poetry from Shakespeare to Clemence Dane, from *Gas Light* to *She Stoops to Conquer*, from Shaw to A. P. Herbert, from Molière to St. John Ervine. Indeed the committee found that the only play that was not acceptable was the West End comedy, and poetry recitations covered a wide range of selection, from Chaucer to Masfield.

The work of this organisation continued during the war, much of it in collaboration with the British War Relief Society and the British Council; entertainment was given to foreign refugees, to air-raid shelterers, to Civil Defence units, hostels and hospitals. There seems no valid reason why such attempts to take education to existing social units, the factory, the library, the cinema audience, the Club, should not continue to be part of the pattern of adult education.

At present we do not cater for anything but a very small percentage of the population. The million students in evening classes and technical colleges represent only just over two per cent of the population. The latest enquiries reveal that in London the figure is under five per cent, it is less than half per cent in Hereford and nil in Huntingdon. The highest figures are recorded in Bradford and Burnley. Before the war about 60,000 to 80,000 people were attracted to University Extension lectures. Sir Richard Livingstone pays a moving tribute to the effort of the W.E.A. in this field of education but he goes on to point out: 'It is remarkable until you remember that there are forty-three million people in this island, and that the number at one cup tie final is quite as large.'

## WHY FURTHER EDUCATION?

In all fairness, therefore, while recognising the important contribution made to adult education, and to social progress, by the great working class educational movements, and to the technical advance and vocational training offered to thousands of young people through the technical colleges and Evening Institutes, one is forced to admit that the appeal has been a limited one. It is undoubtedly true that with the raising of the school leaving age and increased educational opportunities of every kind there may be more people who will be prepared for such an appeal in the future. There will probably always be a minority, though possibly a larger minority, who will want education of University standard in some one or two interests which they will have developed after their schooldays. It is right and proper that they should be catered for and quite against all reason that standards which have won international admiration should be lowered, but there is an essential difference between the scholar type and the rest. In a democracy it is right and proper that the 'rest' should also be catered for. The ordinary man is not the scholar type, and unfortunately most of our adult education in the past has been designed for that type.

The W.E.A. is rightly proud of the well-earned title 'the people's university', and a summary of the occupations of students in grant-earning classes in the 1942-43 Annual Report vividly illustrates this right to maintain that it is pre-eminently a *workers'* movement:

|  |        |
|--|--------|
| <i>Manual Workers</i>                              | 13,380 |
| <i>Clerks, Draughtsmen, Travellers and Foremen</i> | 8,905  |
| <i>Shop Assistants</i>                             | 1,899  |
| <i>Teachers</i>                                    | 6,877  |
| <i>Civil Servants and Postal Workers</i>           | 2,869  |
| <i>Professional and Social Workers</i>             | 2,172  |
| <i>Home Duties and Nursing</i>                     | 13,215 |
| <i>Civil Defence</i>                               | 7,674  |
| <i>Miscellaneous</i>                               | 4,921  |

The W.E.A. has insisted on definite standards of various kinds in connection with its work. It has insisted, for instance, on the non-vocational discipline of learning for learning's

## WHY FURTHER EDUCATION?

sake and has maintained, rightly, that vocational training is a matter for the L.E.A. It has insisted that W.E.A. students shall have the right to choose what education they will have, and who shall give it to them. It has maintained that 'the special task of the W.E.A. has been the provision of working class education in order to enable workers not only to develop their capacity and to equip themselves for their Trade Union, Labour, Co-operative Club activities, but also in the work of securing social and industrial emancipation by the acquisition of knowledge which will lead to intelligent social activity. There is only one alternative, the less desirable one of violent upheaval.'<sup>1</sup>

One can only have respect and admiration for all those pioneers of 'education for the masses' out of which have been born the great working class movements, the W.E.A., the Trade Union Movement and the Co-operative Movement. The middle classes have done nothing comparable with this, though there are faint signs that the Rotarians might be beginning to do so. However, in the middle classes the alertness of women to the need for obtaining informal education and their desire to have knowledgeable slants on social matters, through such organisations as the Women's Institutes, Townswomen's Guilds and the National Council of Women, has been far greater than that of men. This situation is, of course, paralleled in the same income groups in America.

Furthermore people who develop rather slowly, and those who do not 'set themselves up as being brainy' suffer from emotional 'blocks' which prevent them from joining in later life any organisation whose object is primarily 'educational'. They are suspicious and cautious about 'all this education', especially if in their schooldays they have been exposed to a type of education designed for those more adequately endowed than themselves. The educated man is confused with the clever man—and there is no country in the world where being clever is regarded with such deep suspicion as in Britain. If the clever man is once called brilliant, his fate is sealed. In any group the suggestion that a man is brilliant is automatically followed by the fear that he may also be

<sup>1</sup>*Scope and Purpose of Adult Education. Annual Report W.E.A., 1942.*

## WHY FURTHER EDUCATION?

unsound. The consequence is that the ordinary person has a very real diffidence about education, and since the high-brow is suspect he very sensibly hates to appear highbrow, and indeed will do all he can to call attention to the lowness of his brow.

Because, therefore, 75 per cent of the community is not attracted by intellectual pursuits, because so many are afraid of education—either because they feel ‘out of it’ or because they have never found what they most desire—the three great instruments of adult education are the radio, the press and the film. These three great educators, however, owing to the very limitations of the media, tend to be authoritarian and tend to make people passive acceptors of the thoughts of other people rather than to give them practice in thinking for themselves.

It is very easy to complain that people become passive acceptors of what the film, press and radio have to tell them, but if they have no other attractive method of checking their information, of testing it against other opinions, their attitude is bound to be passive. It is true that already this passive attitude is changing to one of passive resistance, but resistance to propaganda must be positive rather than negative, and people must be persuaded that it is no more shrewd to believe in nothing than it is to believe in everything.

A very wise educationist once asserted that education is a matter of the three ties—the School tie, the Cup tie and the Home tie. The School tie is, by the new Education Act, to be improved in colour and quality for everyone, and by the Act authorities will be empowered to do a great deal more about the Cup tie—if we may use that term in its broadest sense to include provision for games and recreation. There is a great deal of social and moral education in the games field, at least we are fond of asserting that this is so, though we are curiously reluctant to allow that the tennis player, the golfer and cricketer are engaged in educating themselves. The approach to civic consciousness in many an adult might well be through the sports and games field. It never occurs to many a sports lover that if he had really done his duty he, as a citizen and an educated man, would have seen to



## WHY FURTHER EDUCATION?

it that the Local Council provided more parks and open spaces.

But what of the Home tie? Broadly speaking, this Home tie education is a matter of linking informal education with home interests, with such things, for instance, as parent education, and education in other groups and associations, as and when required—from the Trade Union Group to the Village Pig Club, from the Old English Dancing Society to the Public House Poetry Corner, from the Public Library to the Canteen. It may be a matter too of giving help over the promotion of Parents' Meetings in schools where such help is desired by the Head Teachers of the schools.

This will not mean that we desire to turn every association into a solemn conclave for 'uplift'. But it will mean that we will at last have paid more than lip service to the fact that every human activity has within it an educational value, 99 per cent of which is wasted if it is not wisely directed, and that we will at last be answering the cry of humanity through the ages: 'In God's name give us something better to do.'

Perhaps the real solution is that of making some definite attempt to organise all the existing facilities for adult education in the various localities. The rural adult education scheme of the Lancashire County Council under the direction of Sir Percy Meadon fulfilled this function in many particulars. Together with the Village Colleges of Cambridgeshire and the Rural Community Council, they form three of the most important experiments on these lines, but these all say 'Come to us'. The majority have to be sought in those surroundings where they are at home. They hate to feel 'strange', 'out of it', 'out of their depth'. Man is certainly a gregarious animal, but there are hosts of people at present uncatered for whose desire is to lose their identity in a group of like-minded people, rather than to establish their identity there, and impose it on others. What most people want is encouragement. No-one would be so foolish as to deny that there must be ample provision for formal education for those who find themselves at home in a world of ideas, and whose culture is a verbal one. Such people should be encouraged and given every facility,

## WHY FURTHER EDUCATION?

but on the whole those are the ones who will make their own way. Because of the clarity and one-pointedness of their minds and because of that toughness which goes with it, they will squeeze from their leisure all that they require in the way of food for the mind. But there are so many who, while conscious of a need, conscious of what Shakespeare called 'those immortal longings', have little help and guidance and encouragement for their rather more delicate mental digestions. The will to learn is perhaps limited, but the feeling for things of the spirit is unlimited.

Probably the best definition of the educated man—especially in modern civilisation—is that he is capable of entertaining himself, capable of entertaining a stranger, and capable of entertaining a new idea. If he cannot entertain himself he is a burden to himself and to others; there is no-one so boring as he who lives in a state of boredom. If he cannot entertain a stranger he is antisocial and is therefore not making that contribution to society which it has a right to expect; and if he cannot entertain a new idea, he has no place in a democracy and may some day awake to the bitter discovery that he has sold the pass of freedom and civilisation to those who benefited from his very inertia.



## II

### THE APPROACH TO INFORMAL EDUCATION

*'Men must be taught as if you taught them not  
And things unknown proposed as things forgot.'*

*'It isn't so much the things they say—as the nasty way they say  
'em.'*—OLD SONG

A recent Gallup poll revealed the fact that about 50 per cent of the adults in this country want to learn something—but they are not at all clear what. According to this enquiry about 17 per cent wanted evening classes and University lectures, but there was no clear-cut expression of desire for any one subject; the majority asked for a variety of things such as facilities for travelling, for guidance on reading in conjunction with the radio, and so on. If the 50 per cent who have a conscious urge to further education are so vague about what they want, how much more at sea are the remaining 50 per cent who are probably evenly divided between those who are frightened of education and those who are apathetic about it.

Yet if further education is a vital necessity in a constantly changing world, some means must be found to interest both those with vague aspirations and those who are allergic to education. How is this to be achieved? Given a mass of people who want something—but they don't quite know what—and another mass who don't care one way or the other, and a perhaps smaller group who are scared at the very thought, how does one set about it?

Quite obviously there is no golden rule, but there are perhaps one or two general guiding principles which have emerged from the experiences of those who have done much pioneer work in the field of informal education in Youth Clubs, and in the war years in clubs for transferred war workers and Civil Defence workers, and from educational experiments in the Services.

In the first place one has to get away from the idea of 'subjects', especially the idea of a 'course of study' on any

## THE APPROACH TO INFORMAL EDUCATION

subject which sounds either learned or boring. Economics, civics and psychology flourish far more readily as a rule if they are translated into some less frightening title, and a great deal of preliminary work has to be done by flitting from flower to flower, and allowing the course of study to take its own shape as the interest of the group develops. This does not mean that there is no plan in the mind of the organiser—it does not mean a lantern lecture on ‘Life in Uganda’ this week and ‘Adrift on a Whaler’ next week, but the organisation of a series of talks with definite point and purpose. The plan, however, must be capable of adaptation, and the audience must not be burdened with it. Just as a great deal of art is the concealment of effort, so further education must have method, but must conceal that method.

In the beginning the important thing is to give people information on the subject which has momentarily captured their interest, or which is most talked of at the time. After all, the true educator can teach most things through one subject. It seems impossible, for instance, to divorce science from citizenship if one goes about it properly. A practical study of the way electricity, gas and water are brought to us, and sewage taken away, may either develop into more specific talks about the public services or about scientific discoveries, and it doesn’t really matter which, since a study of either is bound to produce more understanding citizens. A study of drama if it is introduced imaginatively is almost bound to lead to consideration of either history or politics or the study of the infinite varieties of human conduct, or to a study of other branches of literature. Let us come out into the open and be quite honest about it, it does not really matter what subjects are offered to people, what matters is how they are taught. If the education of the whole individual is to be extended, the range of subject matter is infinite. What matters is the preservation of mental agility throughout life, and the integration of one’s information.

A great deal of informal education must, in the first place, take the form of isolated talks, or else a short series of three or four talks, and in this matter many of those anxious to

## THE APPROACH TO INFORMAL EDUCATION

promote informal education either among youth groups, parents' associations, or other groups of adults, would be well advised to take a lesson from the B.B.C. and indulge in a series of related groups of talks, rather than a straight spate of six months to a year on a topic which the mildly interested feel should be exhausted in far less time, lest it exhaust them.

It is indeed fortunate that no-one has yet discovered how extremely educational knitting is. It is highly mathematical, with its infinite rows of plain and purl. The translation of a knitting pattern to the uninitiated seems as much an abstract and theoretical piece of reasoning as any algebraical formula. Fortunately, however, few have realised this as yet, and consequently if a young woman admires a teacher's or club leader's jumper she is offered the pattern, or shown how to do the new stitch. How different the attitude will be as soon as the educational value of these abstract calculations is made common knowledge! Then, when Doris admires the jumper and wants to make one like it, nine out of ten educators will say: 'Ah, my dear, if you want to learn to make a jumper like this you should come to our classes on Thursday night. We are having twelve lectures on the history of the development and manufacture of the knitting needle.' When people want information they want it at once. Many an opening is lost by this desire to fit information into a series of classes. The radiogram in a Youth Centre goes wrong. The Warden, who is perforce a bit of a mechanic in addition to all his other accomplishments, is hastily summoned and puts it right, while groups of interested boys breathe down his neck and hamper his movements. 'What did you do, sir?' 'Why does that work?' So frequently the answer is: 'If you want to know how to do things of this sort, you ought to come to our handy man's class on Friday nights.' But they don't want to come to the handy man's class on Friday night, they want a piece of information there and then, while it seems important to them, or else they want to be told: 'Well, look here, I know a fellow who is a positive wizard with radio. Would you like him to come down and give us a talk about the things that go wrong with the radio?'

## THE APPROACH TO INFORMAL EDUCATION

We are apt to be much too solemn about education. There is a vast school of thought which clings to the view that the only possible way to learn anything is to take a course of at least twelve, or preferably twenty-four, lectures on it. This is certainly a way to *study* a subject, but the average person, the ordinary man in the street, isn't a student, he is a learner; all is grist that comes to his mill.

It is much easier, of course, to arrange a long series, it is much more difficult to get the occasional talk, but if it is a choice between capturing a present interest or having no interest at all, there is no doubt as to which is the better method. In our desire that people shall attend long series of classes on selected subjects we often kill all spontaneity and withhold information, in the mistaken idea that not knowing will drive people into committing themselves to a course of instruction. Much educational opportunity is lost because of this desire to encourage people to join classes. Mary rushes into the club room and says: 'Miss! Agnes is in the cloak-room and her nose is bleeding something awful!' The leader hurries into the cloakroom, followed by half the club (since there is nothing like a little blood to draw people together) and on her return is asked by those who failed to get a ring-side seat: 'Has it stopped now? What did you do?' In an attempt to get up a little interest for the First Aid class, whose numbers are falling off, she cannot resist telling them: 'If you want to be able to deal with emergencies of this kind you should come to our First Aid class at 7.30 on Wednesdays.' But they aren't ready yet to come to the First Aid class on Wednesday or any other night. Their interest has just been aroused on this subject of nose bleeding, and the only way to get further interest is to explain there and then how you cope with such a situation, leaving in their minds the idea that there are other situations and accidents which are equally fascinating, or else leading them on to the interesting question of how both the stopping of blood and the letting of blood have been treated through the ages.

In dealing with the apathetic and the diffident, one of the most valuable methods of proceeding is not by an introductory course to be followed by an elementary and then an

## THE APPROACH TO INFORMAL EDUCATION

advanced course, but by plunging *in medias res* at the point which has attracted their attention, and working either backwards or forwards according to how their interest develops. For example, a talk on hospitals arising out of the fact that Percy's little brother has just been taken to 'the fever hospital' may well make a jumping-off ground for a series of talks on the development of hospitals through the ages, or the whole question of health services generally. A talk on model railways may proceed to a talk on aeroplanes and even meteorology, or it might equally well give rise to a series of talks on travel. One knows very well that in advocating a scheme of this kind one is asking that organisers of informal education shall have a wide cultural background themselves, and that they shall also have a wide field of experts to draw from, but in this whole matter of the education of the diffident and apathetic only the real expert is good enough, and it is versatility and adaptability which are needed in planning such education, rather than a rigid pattern.

Even the expert must be prepared to allow the subject to grow under his hands rather than to force his audience to take what he feels they require, or indeed what they thought they required when they started. In a Youth Centre (one of those godless places where, if those who never visit them are to be believed, young people do nothing but dance) in a rather tough quarter of a town in the industrial North, a group of boys suddenly decided that they wanted to *learn* something—that they were tired of 'messaging about'. This situation always arises if one waits patiently for it. When questioned as to what they wanted to learn they were extremely vague, and after about ten days' deliberation they came forward with a request for First Aid. Now it was fairly clear that there was no real interest in First Aid, it was just a 'subject' they had heard about. They had really chosen it for want of something to say, or possibly because they had discarded all the other 'subjects' which occurred to them. It was particularly unfortunate that they had chosen this, since most of the really first-class instructors in the area were already fully engaged. But the organiser had the extreme good luck to interest a local doctor in the group.



## THE APPROACH TO INFORMAL EDUCATION

He arrived on the first evening bearing with him a box which contained that half skeleton which is such a nightmare to every medical student, and which, as a rule, he disposes of as soon as his student days are over. However, this dour Aberdonian had lent his to many friends and relations, all of whom had managed to get out of buying it from him. He strode into the group, gathered the nine boys around him, and to their infinite delight they were able to handle, and, if the truth be told, mess about with, all these fascinating bones. After about a quarter of an hour of this he said: 'Well now, you know what your bones look like. Strip!'

Rather astonished, since they had not bargained for this, but taking heart from the fact that he was a doctor and therefore possibly 'funny that way' they did so. He then provided them with bright blue and yellow chalks, and said: 'Now mark where those bones come on your body.' This was another excellent opportunity for high jinks and a little foolery, but most of them got on with the job pretty well, and such a sight as they then presented has seldom been seen on sea or land. 'Now,' he said, 'you're a bit cold, aren't you? Let's do a spot of physical jerks to warm ourselves up.' For the next quarter of an hour they did physical jerks, interspersed with some comments by the doctor on breathing. He then said: 'Och, but I'm thirsty. Isn't there a canteen in this place?' On being assured that there was, he said: 'Well, come on then, let's go down and have a drink. Throw on your clothes, and show me the way.'

At the counter of the canteen, further surprises awaited them. Eyeing with some misgiving that beverage which those with a long experience of club canteens have learnt to recognise as 'cofftea' and waving away the proffered bottles of 'pop', he said: 'Haven't you any milk, or a milk drink?' Milk! Six foot one and a half of Aberdonian drinking milk in public! Obviously milk could not be such a sissy drink after all. Two of the more daring ventured to have some too, encouraged by the rather lively remarks of the doctor on milk as a builder, which would have delighted the heart of the Radio Doctor.

Then, with all the air of one who had just remembered, he said: 'Mm, I came down here to teach you fellows a bit about

## THE APPROACH TO INFORMAL EDUCATION

First Aid, bandaging and the rest of it, but I can't stay any longer tonight. Look, if you will bring along a wee rag next week' (giving them the dimensions of a triangular bandage) 'we'll have a shot at tying one another up, shall we?'

The next week twenty-three boys of ages ranging from seventeen to twenty turned up, and with slight variations the same programme of elementary anatomy, physiology, exercises, and dietetics at the canteen (this time with some bandaging) was followed. A few weeks later, when the class had risen in numbers to forty (all of whom swore that they were foundation members), new recruits had to be turned away, and for over three years that class went on. It continued indeed until the doctor was transferred elsewhere. Every one of those boys passed one First Aid examination, and seventeen of them gained an additional certificate, but what they learnt during those three years was far more than either First Aid on the one hand, or Physical Training on the other. And that is just the way of informal education. Like the invalid who usually requires small but frequent snacks, those who are engaging in informal education in their spare time need to have their appetites tempted, they need to have their mental digestion carefully considered, lest one increase either their sense of inferiority on the one hand or their indifference on the other.

Another idea which is rapidly losing ground, but not rapidly enough, is that education can only be received and assimilated if one is sitting on hard chairs in straight rows. People have a right to comfort in their leisure hours. Half the attraction of the cinema is the fact that, as one unemployed miner's wife said during the years of the depression: 'My afternoon in the cinema is the only time I sit in an armchair in comfort for three hours without being disturbed.' People have a right to comfort and this includes not being asked to listen to talks in a bad light. In war time it was very difficult having to conduct educational work in a bad light because people had tried to save on black-out material. And good light is not enough of itself. A hard, glaring light is also very distracting, and there is no scientific evidence to prove that one learns more under the hard glare of a white-shaded electric light bulb, than under one which is shaded more attractively.



## THE APPROACH TO INFORMAL EDUCATION

A great deal more attention must be paid to this question of comfort and lighting if we are to expect people to indulge in leisure-time education. The question of warmth is also extremely important. Most people will agree that they cannot think when they are cold, but one of the things that never seem to occur to us is that the average office and factory worker to say nothing of the cotton operative and the miner, the steel worker, the core-maker and the man in the forge, spend the whole of their working day in a fairly high temperature, and often a damp heat at that. Therefore in their leisure hours they tend to feel very much colder than we realise, so that it is usually the room which is too warm for the instructor which is rightly heated for the members of the class. The manual worker's wife or the miner's wife does not indulge in a large fire because she is improvident and extravagant, but because she knows the right temperature for her men if they are not to catch cold.

Above all, further education for the ordinary person must have entertainment value. We must get away from the idea that entertainment is 'mere'. There has been too much of this tendency to regard everything that we ourselves do not happen to like as 'mere'. Quite often this dubbing as 'mere' of those entertainments, hobbies, recreations, to which we are not drawn, is really nothing more than a messy attempt to claim an intelligence which is really lacking. Even fashion is never 'mere' and not always trivial. Some of the most fascinating problems of history are the Greek fashion for democracy, and the Elizabethan fashion for exploration. The intellectuals of his day probably called Drake a 'mere' explorer—the King of Spain certainly called him a 'mere' adventurer.

It is difficult to see why people should imagine that entertainment necessarily decreases the value of education. The amusing story, the jingling rhyme, often serve to fix information far more firmly than any amount of prosy repetition—a fact that a former generation of history teachers and teachers of classics knew well. The shameless pun has been used to help the memory of countless law students, and a recent radio series of science talks to sixth formers used the same technique. The nursery rhyme metre can be used to get over the most shy-

## THE APPROACH TO INFORMAL EDUCATION

making bits of instruction to the more sophisticated; the London Passenger Transport Board adopted this technique with effect during the war years. People do like a laugh—it breaks tension and it helps both to fix information and provide temporary relaxation.

As to the lowering of standards, the *ability* to give entertainment value to instruction is usually reserved to the expert. Only the person who is on top of his subject is in a position to laugh at it, since he sees it in its true perspective. Moreover there is really no excuse for being quite so dull. We have suffered too long from so-called experts who do not even sound as though they are interested in a subject themselves, so that one scarcely knows how they can hope to interest others. One must be able to convince people that education can be a happy adventure, and for this one needs all the conviction and indeed all the effort that might be entailed if one were a commercial traveller trying to sell a pair of bellows to a one-armed man who lived in a centrally heated flat. This demands a very high standard indeed, but it means a standard in which perhaps the emphasis is different, rather than the matter.

The job can be done, and that it is well worth doing has been proved to those who have seen crowded audiences, with happy faces, clamouring for more, and dispersing only to start up their own groups for discussion and reading and further information. Most people are really like the elephant's child—full of 'satiabile curiosity'. They like to know, they like to be interested, but they do hate being bored. It is not true to say that the wider one's purpose the more purposeless one becomes. To hear an audience going away saying: 'Gosh, that was fun, but it makes you *think*, doesn't it?' is not only a joy in itself but an indication that such people are being well and truly educated. If the world could have been made more sensible by talking cold hard reason at it, it would have become a perfect place long ago, certainly by the end of the eighteenth century, that Age of Reason. The majority of men think with their feelings, and therefore they must be made happy first and then they will find to their astonishment that they are delighting in the clever and good and beautiful. '*Vanum est vobis ante lucem surgere*'—which being freely translated means: 'It's plain silly

## THE APPROACH TO INFORMAL EDUCATION

to pretend that we're more sensible than we are.' In any case, we are not catering for the scholar, for the student (though even he would be all the better for learning to appreciate a pretty turn of phrase) but for the common man. The research student of history, the budding economist, the young engineer and the research chemist are so keen that they will overcome the disadvantages of the dullest of lecturers, but if we really believe that the next century is to be the century of the common man, it is the requirements of the common man which must be considered first.

This brings us to the whole question of presentation. There is an appalling impression abroad that almost anyone can 'give a talk' and that if it is not called a lecture there need be very little attempt at a more than sketchy presentation. But the average man and woman of to-day, whether young or old, has become accustomed to the careful, expert, indeed slick presentation of the film and the radio. In both these media nothing is left to chance, and therefore people are apt to be quickly bored (if they are not made impatient) by anybody who is obviously unprepared and fumbling. Dobson, of Dobson and Young (two people who probably know far more about the technique of informal education than anyone in the country), says that in any talk 90 per cent of one's consideration should be given to presentation, and only 10 per cent to content. This may seem an exaggeration, but we should do well to remember that an average radio talk of twenty minutes has usually meant at least two and a half hours of production. That easy 'I'm talking to you by your own fireside' manner is not a spontaneous burble. Nearly every talk on the radio is 'produced', and this matter of presentation is essential if one is to capture and hold the attention of people who have not the student's zest for any given subject.

Anyone embarking upon informal education must study very carefully not only what will arrest people's attention, but what will hold it, and still more important, how long one can hold it without using the device of another story, or an illustration, or a change of voice, or even a change of subject. The time for which one can hold people's attention varies from place to place, and from group to group, and varies indeed

## THE APPROACH TO INFORMAL EDUCATION

according to the age range of the group with which one is dealing. Obviously, one can hold the attention of an audience whose age range is anything between eight and eighty for a much shorter period of time than that of more homogeneous age groups, whether of adults or adolescents.

The giver of talks must take advantage of every type of mechanical and visual aid, every device indeed which can give variety to his presentation. Even the amount of emphasis to be placed on salient points is worthy of careful consideration. In a word, he has to be something of a salesman. The cheapjack in the market-place can give very valuable lessons in timing; and why should one be ashamed to sell one's goods if one believes in them, whether they be furniture for the mind or furniture for the home? Surely the aim of anyone giving a talk is that people should listen, but all too many people tend to give the impression that the child's definition of the lecturer, 'a man who gets up and talks to himself for a very long time', is also the lecturer's own interpretation of his duties. A great amount of attention to audience reaction, constant experimentation, and constant rearrangement of one's material are necessary.

For instance, in a series of talks to adolescents on reading, I used to have a session called 'Nonsense and Humour and where it can take you'. The first few times we began with rather crude epitaphs—preferably with one which they could see for themselves in a churchyard in the locality. We then proceeded to famous epitaphs on great men and from that to some of the literary gems of this kind. It was discovered, however, that the audience reaction to the crude epitaph however funny was poor. We then rearranged the programme and started with limericks—or clerihews. Here the reaction was immediate and we could then insert the epitaph. Until I was on friendly terms with the group they were not quite sure whether they ought to laugh at epitaphs—it did not seem respectful!

Dobson and Young have discovered an eagerness to listen to music and have fostered a readiness to understand every type of music, helping the novice to listen with ease rather than diffidence and with discrimination rather than with that lofty disdain which sometimes goes by the name of 'musical appre-

## THE APPROACH TO INFORMAL EDUCATION

ciation'. They have realised that even if education is meat and drink to civilised man, it is not necessary to serve the dish in the same fashion time after time. They have grasped the fact that the people of this century have been taught by the film, the radio and the press to value and expect slickness, to appreciate masterly technique and to applaud a light touch. Educationists in other fields must also regard their message as something which must be no less slick, no less well-timed and no less entertaining. People do not learn less because they laugh while learning, and what shall it profit the gloomy however clever, if only the handful listen to them?

Another essential of informal education is that one should use the language of the people, and be both clear and homely. It is quite easy, of course, to impress people by long words, but eventually an audience, which is not accustomed to that particular professional jargon, becomes stunned rather than stimulated. If one is to avoid giving people mental indigestion, any attempt at informal education must be at the level at which people can 'take it'. It must even be peptonised if necessary. It can never be repeated too often that what can be clearly conceived can be clearly expressed. If this clarity is not achieved there is not only the danger of drugging an audience with such horrid phrases as 'teleological arrangements', 'postulating hypotheses' and 'making syntheses' (the nearest the average audience gets to this is a feeling that it is something to do with synthetic, and therefore phoney), but also the danger of creating yet another group of people who are not stimulated to thought, but who are provided with enough material to enable them to exchange intellectual gossip. To think that one thinks is possibly even more dangerous than not to think at all.

The language of instruction is probably in need of revision in almost every stage of education. One only has to consider how far from life as modern children lead it are most nursery rhymes. Children like the jingles, but they've no idea what it all means. Let them continue to learn about Miss Muffet who sat on a tuffet (whatever that is) but why not also learn about 'That clever young chemist named Perkin, Who discovered new dyes for your jerkin' and 'Little Alfredo, who turned on



## THE APPROACH TO INFORMAL EDUCATION

the radio'? It is depressing to discover so many classes in a state similar to that of a group of four-year-olds in a lovely nursery school in a midland town. They were singing a song about gypsies, pedlars and tinkers and a caravan all 'on a green sward-oh, and a merry milkmaid-oh'. They were very half-hearted, and no wonder. It is a fairly even bet that none of them had ever seen a tinker or a gypsy, and certainly they had no idea what 'a green sward-oh' was. And no-one told them. When one of the brightest of them was asked what the song meant, he said: 'Oh, it doesn't mean nuffin', it's just a song.' It may be argued that it was a 'pretty' song, but the lovely colours made by dyes are also 'pretty'.

Can we not begin to sing the truth in nursery rhymes about life today, as it actually is—about the splendid design and pattern of those allotments and pylons which children *have* seen, as well as about the glories of nature—about the beauty of the Forth Bridge which is a model in steel of the same principle of weight distribution as that of a girl standing with her feet apart holding her little brother laughingly over her head? Walt Disney has shown the way pictorially in his re-writing of fairy stories, but much remains to be done—a modern version of Dick Whittington, for instance, who could quite easily sit down on the dusty road while waiting for a chance to hitch-hike and turn on his portable wireless set. On hearing the chimes of Big Ben his cat might well remark, 'Oh turn again, Whittington, I much prefer the Light programme.' We deny people the imaginative thrill of the wonders of the age in which they live, and while forcing them to look back, we blame them if they are not interested in progress. We have spent far too long in educating young students about yesterday when what we have to be at is the education of the average of today's citizens about the world of tomorrow.

There seems to be a general feeling that the homely phrase is opposed to the cultural phrase, but culture is not a hot-house growth. There is a great deal of nonsense talked about culture and taste, and much of our present discontent is due to the fact that false distinctions have grown up between what is cultured and what is practical. Why is it cultural to make a fair-to-average water-colour, but not cultural to make a drain



## THE APPROACH TO INFORMAL EDUCATION

pipe? Why is it cultural to watch birds and not cultural to watch aeroplanes? Why is it cultural to be familiar with the vagaries of the Greek aorist and not cultural to know about the by-products of coal tar? Why is it cultural to go to a play however trivial, and not so cultural to go to see a film? Why, while it is cultural to smile at Dickens' Sam Weller and the Old 'Un, is it a mark of refinement to find his lineal descendant, the London bus driver, coarse, common or familiar? Culture is a matter of standards and attitudes towards subjects, not of subjects themselves. English literature or art indifferently taught can be the negation of culture, and equally biology well taught can be a thing of beauty. Taste can well be left to look after itself, for when people begin to be self-conscious about it it is usually bad.

But if the 'subject' method is to be discarded, if 'courses' are to be abandoned in favour of related topics, if the whole approach must be both simple and entertaining and if no-one is to be frightened and everyone stimulated—how can education be 'inserted' into existing social units, and how can those who come to scoff be persuaded to remain to learn? The remainder of this book makes some attempt to describe various methods of approach which have already been tried and attempts to draw some conclusions as to how such methods could be extended and developed.

The first approach is probably through the stomach. In Youth Groups at any rate, an approach of this kind is facilitated by the fact that any normal adolescent can eat anything at any time anywhere, and the what, the why and the how of eating can provide jumping-off grounds for almost any subject, from a series of talks on other countries, beginning with the food of the country, to a series of talks on health since there are few who are not interested in indigestion—from their own to the children's—from grandma's to auntie's. The approach through the stomach indeed is no less useful with the older group. There is nothing that appeals more to the busy mother than a cup of tea she has not had to make herself, and even father is not averse to a tasty snack or a drink in the middle of a talk, whether it be on gardening or on politics. We have probably never explored the full social significance of eating

## THE APPROACH TO INFORMAL EDUCATION

together, in spite of the constant example set by Christ, that expert teacher of the common man.

The next great avenue of approach is through the feet. One can be led from dancing to games, from games to camping, from camping to holidays in general, and from holidays to the study of languages. Even elementary psychology has been introduced from time to time by pointing out that the matter with So-and-so is probably that his feet are hurting him!

Another most fruitful method is the approach through the eyes. Eighty-four per cent of our perception comes through our eyes, and yet we will persist in so much talking and so little looking. The use of pictures, graphs, charts, the very obvious use of the walls of any building in which people congregate, has never been fully exploited, while that great educational medium the film offers a wealth of material on a limitless number of subjects.

Another method of approach is through the feelings. We have done a great deal to educate people in the use of their bodies, the use of their hands, the use of their minds, but we are apt to imagine that the feelings should either be ignored or left to look after themselves. Yet by recognition of their value as emotional education alone, a new approach can be made to music, drama, problems of marriage and parenthood, and even religious experience. Christianity is after all one of the most personal of the great religions, a religion which lays emphasis in its golden rule not so much on action as on right feelings.

Yet another approach may be made through work, through the ordinary day-to-day work in which people are engaged just as much as through the exercise of any leisure-time craft. Fortunately the ordinary worker still possesses an enormous pride in his own skill, and an interest in the skill of others. From an interest in gardening one can proceed to an interest in one's own and other people's geographical situation, to folk lore and customs. From the romance of the making of everyday things, which some of us are apt to take for granted, one can proceed to the marvels of science and medicine, and limitless suggestions for courses of study open out from the casual 'How is it done?' which can be as thrilling as the most recent

## THE APPROACH TO INFORMAL EDUCATION

'Who done it?' Just as the approach to a great deal of education in school must be practical, so a great deal of further education has to be started from the practical angle, from the situation in which adults find themselves and the practical details of the world around them.

The approach through the ears, that is the spoken word, though vastly important can probably be given last place, partly because it is used so much already. Nevertheless the use of the radio rather than its abuse, the use of the library as a social centre, the social as well as the private necessity for reading, are all approaches which have to be made through the ears, and it is from this material lying close to hand that progress can be made in the direction of education through discussion and education through citizenship and service.

It would seem, therefore, that any venture into informal education should have a definite threefold policy. In the first place, every effort should be made to encourage the lively minded, if unconventional, to work in this field. As a student at one of our most successful working men's colleges puts it: 'It is of paramount importance that whoever is going to deliver a course of lectures should always bear in mind the fact that evening class students are not starting fresh. Indeed, for most of us our daily tasks are very exacting, and we arrive somewhat the worse for wear. . . . It is therefore very important that the courses be so framed that they can be easily assimilated even if this means to some extent a loss of exactness. The tutor who is concerned at all costs to put forward only exact data has a laudable attitude but will probably finish with empty benches. Those indulging in leisure time education must be interesting first, last and all the time.' Just as brains and charm seldom go together, so we too often find that the exact scholars are so dull that they practically don't exist. The success of much informal education is due to the instructor who can introduce the wisdom of the serpent clad in the bright skin of flippancy. It is better that people should be shocked into thinking for themselves, than that they should never think at all. The time has passed, if it ever really was, when people can be persuaded to improve their minds by instructors in whom the wine of life seems to run to vinegar, any more than they can be persuaded

## THE APPROACH TO INFORMAL EDUCATION

to improve their bodies by instructors whose own physique has run to fat.

Any venture into informal education must rely for a great deal of its freshness and a great deal of its attraction on voluntary help—preferably help from the group itself as well as from outsiders. It has been found over and over again in the various experiments in the Services, that we need a group of tried and trusty volunteers organised round a small staff, who make every effort to create the atmosphere of a home or a club used *by* people rather than a special place provided *for* them. The group themselves can take a share in discovering what is needed, in suggesting the experts whom they wish to hear, and all can do their part in entertaining the expert and welcoming him to their midst instead of tracking him to his scholastic lair and sitting at his feet.

It is necessary to develop both salesmanship and showmanship. These must not be wholly on the side of the expert who comes to deliver the goods, but on the side of the group itself in advertising for more customers. The cinema advertises its wares. So do the soup and soap manufacturers, and all those who can provide us with those thousands of necessities we would never have dreamed that we wanted had they not been offered to us at bargain prices or deferred payments. There seems no reason why one should be too proud to advertise an expedition into the many and varied avenues of education, no reason why people should not be urged to come to cookery as attractively as they are urged to come to Clacton. The L.C.C. has paved the way in its new posters advertising Evening Classes, but unfortunately there is a tendency in these to harp on how much the individual will benefit himself if he joins. Could we not also offer him a laugh?

The cry of humanity through the ages has always been: 'What shall I do?' Little children start it almost before they can walk, and the retired business man and civil servant and the old age pensioner are still saying it. Most people live in one kind of mental condition, but long to live in another if only they could find the way. The seekers after goodness, truth and beauty are, in fact, not wholly confined to those who can be vocal and articulate about their need. There is no lack of desire

## THE APPROACH TO INFORMAL EDUCATION

to do and to be, but we need much more of the truly missionary spirit in the field of further education. We need people who will come into it with the late Dr. Stead's favourite quotation as their guiding principle: 'I am come that ye might have life and that ye might have it more abundantly.' We need also those who will be prepared to follow it up by saying *not* 'Fall in and follow me!' like any 'pinchbeck dictator', but who at the given time will be big enough, unselfish enough to say: 'It is expedient for you that I go from you.' By calling in voluntary help from within as well as from outside the group they will be preparing all the time for that departure.



### III

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE STOMACH

---

School Meals and Club Canteens; Poetry in Pubs; the Family Tie; Parents' Associations; School Medical Services; Citizenship and the Stomach

---

*'I love the dear clinic that weighs me with care  
And the Nursery School Teacher who tooth-combs my hair,  
I love the Youth Centres so toil-worn for me,  
But my mother, God bless her, she never sees me.'*

*'Lions do not ask one another to their lairs, neither do the birds keep open nest.'*—MAX BEERBOHM

THE social and educative value of the meal has been increasingly realised in recent years. One has only to visit a Nursery School where the toddlers help to serve and wait on one another, or an open-air school where all ages meet over the three meals which are part of both their education and treatment, to be convinced of this.

In too many schools, however, there is still the atmosphere of the traditional soup kitchen, the servers with the large utensils, and the children lined up with the plates, like so many little Oliver Twists but with, of course, the essential difference that asking for more is welcomed, and indeed it is well worth the asking. There are still too few schools where the meal is a social function like that described by an enthusiastic newly-appointed head of a Senior School, who writes:

'There had been few opportunities in the school routine for social training, but one at least was seized during the first week. There were about twenty children from the country who stayed at school for dinner. They sat in a classroom, one child to a desk, each with its paper parcel of food which it kept hidden on its knee and into which it dipped surreptitiously. They had nothing to drink unless they brought something from home. A teacher stood in front, and watched them



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE STOMACH

while they ate in silence, and until they finished, which usually took about twenty minutes, and they were then turned out into the playground until afternoon school began an hour later. In bad weather they continued to sit in the classroom under the eye of the caretaker.

'Here was a chance for social reform. I took two of the children to Woolworth's where they chose some cheerful yellow cups, saucers and plates. I provided an attractive runner for the table, bought a kettle and jugs, brush and dustpan and started new arrangements. Cocoa was to be made each day with plenty of milk, for which the children were to pay  $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. a week, food was to be unpacked and put on plates, each child had a knife and a teaspoon, a cup and saucer and a plate; they were to set their own tables, clear away and wash up. The meal was to be eaten in the hall where there is plenty of room and there are two large sinks with hot and cold water, installed by the A.R.P. authorities and most convenient for washing up.

'We had plenty of spare classroom tables and the boys said they would carry them in and arrange them to form a large table. We even discovered some pinafores, made in school and not sold, and these were worn when washing-up time came. Everyone was to help to set and clean tables, and wash up and sweep up crumbs afterwards. Each member of staff was to take turn in staying and was asked to try to make the meal as enjoyable to the children, and as informal, as possible. Soon they were chattering away at the lunch table in a free and friendly manner; they were allowed to have the wireless programme if they wanted it; on wet days they played or read or amused themselves at the tables with anything they liked, until they could go into their own classroom with their own teacher.'

Many country school teachers say that they were very dubious about school meals at first, particularly when they heard that the meals were to be brought round in containers from a central depot. They were sure that the containers would not work and that the meals would be cold, and that the children would not eat them, or that at any rate they would not like them. Yet at a conference not so long ago called

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE STOMACH

in one of our most rural counties, the Head Teacher of a most isolated school said: 'You know, the odd thing is that I'm beginning to get a kick out of these school meals. The children are looking better and healthier, they work better in afternoon school, they are tasting vegetables they never saw before on plates, only growing in the fields. It's fun too getting them to eat. One of the girls announced on the first day that there was a pudding with custard: "I don't like custard!" I knew that if she got away with it we'd have no end of fads and fancies, so I said as quick as lightning: "Neither do I, but this is canary sauce." She tasted it and liked it, and by special request we never have custard at our school dinners, only canary sauce.'

But the meal—the approach through the stomach—is of just as much, if not more, educational value in adolescent and adult groups. The Trade School in Dundee, one of the first in the country and surely one of the finest, makes a function of its meals. Indeed the whole school is run rather on Adult Club lines. There, in a large and bright room the boys (aged 15-16) are served with a three-course meal and a half a pint of milk at midday. There are no long institutional tables, but smaller tables seating about ten or eleven people. A master sits at the head of each table and two boys from each serve and clear away. There is a jolly murmur of conversation, but no clatter. The whole atmosphere is one of meeting for an enjoyable meal rather than that of re-fuelling. At a high table sits the Headmaster and his visitors, and once a week there is always a more or less distinguished visitor who 'says a few words'. The boys sit back and listen with all the air of a body of Rotarians, and the speaker is thanked by a proposer and seconder from among their own ranks. If anyone doubts the civilising and educative force of a meal, a visit to this school would do much to convince him.●

In any youth club it has become commonplace to say that the canteen is the heart of the club—a modern version possibly of the old saying that the way to a man's heart is through his stomach. It is the heart of the club not merely because it is usually a very profitable financial concern, but because in those informal chats which take place in the canteen the Club Leader is often given the first inkling concerning the personal

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE STOMACH

problems of the young people themselves, and concerning the particular topics on which they are anxious to receive further information (which being interpreted means informal education).

Moreover, it is not only what goes on in any given surroundings but the surroundings themselves, which have definite educational value. Behaviour is very largely conditioned by surroundings, the very table-cloth is an educational matter. The Catholic Youth Centre at Blackburn has its ground floor laid out like a café with small square tables, laid for two, four and six. The first thing that strikes one when one visits it is that the tables are covered with white table-cloths.

On one occasion a visitor said to the priest in charge: 'How nice to see table-cloths, and white ones too! But don't they get very dirty?' 'I'm glad you like them,' he said. 'We had an awful struggle to get them, and of course they do get dirty, but not as dirty as they did—they're cleaner every week! You see, when you are careless and bump into people and spill things on a piece of oil-cloth it's easily mopped up, and you go on being careless. But when you spill things on a cloth the mark remains to remind you, and though you may laugh it off you're more careful next time, and that means you learn to mind your manners.'

It is not suggested that every school and youth centre should have white table-cloths in its dining-room and canteen. Undoubtedly oil-cloth has its place, particularly for toddlers who are learning, but for older people pretty table-cloths have a definite place in the teaching of social behaviour and therefore of manners, quite apart from their aesthetic value. There is too much provision of oil-cloth, wiping it with a dirty rag and calling it hygiene. For every ten men who will spit on a stone floor only one will spit on a carpet, and that is progress.

The standard of table appointments in all canteens should be as high as possible, and so should the standard of service. It should not be possible in this year of grace to be served with a cup of tea in a canteen and, on remarking that there are two dead flies in the cup, to be told: 'Yes, it's the hot water that kills them.' Not that, of course, high standards necessarily bring the appropriate results on all occasions, nor that an

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE STOMACH

improvement in manners is always the immediate result of providing pleasant surroundings and daintily served food.

For instance, one of the most devastating experiences was that encountered in the youth section of a community centre on the slum clearance end of a certain housing estate. At the Christmas party every effort was made to ensure that there should be exciting food attractively served. The *pièce de résistance* was meant to be little decorated jellies in soufflé cups, but unfortunately this proved too much for some of the boys. One or two started to throw them at people seated at other tables, and in a split second the room was reduced to a shambles of broken jellies, overturned tables, smashed crockery, howling boys and screaming girls. Nevertheless, even this brought with it its salutary lesson, since, when at last the jellies were exhausted and the excitement had died down, even the wildest spirits were somewhat subdued. The rest of the party proceeded in rather muted fashion, and as they went home several of the ringleaders made shamefaced apologies, though nothing had been said about the whole incident. Moreover, never again was there any commotion of this kind, in fact 'being well-behaved over your food' became one of the unwritten laws of the club.

This is not merely an extreme instance of the impact of the unfamiliar on the adolescent, but an instance too of the very tiresomely high place which the whole question of social behaviour has in the adolescent mind. Manners is one of the things that concern the adolescent most, and by that he means the problems of social behaviour. In an enquiry<sup>1</sup> made in adolescent groups about the things they learned from the cinema some three or four years ago, manners was one of the things most frequently mentioned. It rears its head in many surprising places. For instance, on one occasion I had arranged to meet, outside a local café, a boy who was in some difficulties which might have landed him in trouble with the police. The boy knew exactly the way in which a woman expects to be taken in to a public restaurant. He knew how to choose a table, and how to give his guests a seat, and during the course

<sup>1</sup>*Report on the Cinema and the Adolescent.* British Film Institute Annual Report, 1943.

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE STOMACH

of conversation, in an effort to restore some of his self-respect, I said: 'You know, I think you are being a most awful fool. If only you would make up your mind to chuck all this sort of thing' (alluding to his difficulties) 'there is just no knowing what you might be able to do with your life. You've got a job which has quite decent prospects, you know how to look after yourself and, you know, you really have most awfully nice manners.'

'Huh,' was the reply, 'I picked up all that sort of thing at the flicks.'

Again, in an enquiry made about subjects which young people would like to have been taught at school, out of a sample of 1,000, 750 of whom had left school at fourteen and the rest at sixteen to eighteen, in each case the fifth subject suggested was manners, and the comments concerning this unexpected demand were both illuminating and pathetic. The most frequent type of remark was: 'I wish we had been taught manners—how to behave, introductions and suchlike,' but an older girl wrote: 'I wish that our curriculum had not been so crowded, so that we could have learned some Social Sense—both my schools were in a poor area and my parents are very poor, although they are grand people. But when I went to a rather well-off College with a scholarship, there were so many things about behaviour that I did not know.' A boy puts the same point rather differently: 'It is not enough to teach boys that they must not hit girls, there are many things about manners with a girl that boys need to be told.'

A lack of 'social sense' and the confusion and often suffering it brings can cut very deep. Many Club Leaders say that one of their most popular subjects for discussion is 'Etiquette' or 'Manners'. We know, of course, that parents ought to cope with this question of manners, and most of them do honestly teach those rudiments of good behaviour that they know, but if we educate young people out of their social milieu it is sheer cruelty not to teach them the manners that go with such a milieu.

English life is composed of a curious hierarchy of social classes, with subtle distinctions of income and prestige. There is no greater hardship than that endured by young people who



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE STOMACH

find themselves being 'educated out of their class'. They feel everything and they fear everything, for when you are young to be 'different' is to be wrong, and many young people find themselves 'different' at school and after a while 'different' at home. Any method that can be devised to give them a sense of ease and of poise is something which will contribute in no small measure to their happiness and therefore to their success. After all, the children of the better-off still have a great deal of very careful instruction in 'social sense' as well as behaviour, and it is sheer inverted snobbery to pretend that it does not matter for everyone. As one boy puts it, 'When you know how to behave you can enjoy things so much better'—in other words the wheels of civilised life are oiled for you, yourself, as well as for the other people!

The whole question of manners is queerly mixed up in the minds of many of these young people with the whole unfortunate business of 'class'. One of the older teachers with whom this was discussed said: 'One of the failures of the old Board School system was that children leaving at fourteen often did so with an inferiority complex about the class into which they happened to have been born. The 'free place' child at the High School has often left school with the same feeling, and one wonders very much whether the elementary school boy who goes to the public school is going to suffer even more than either of these others have done.'

One notices this feeling of 'inferiority' in so many Youth groups where the secondary school members and those who left school at fourteen fail to mix, due to no fault on the part of the former, but to what seems an almost inbred feeling in the elementary school child that his opinions, his standards no less than his ability, are bound to be less worth while than those of the better educated. Secondary education for all may do something to ease that feeling, but this will only be achieved if there is absolute parity of status and equipment in all types of schools, and only if some attention is given in all these schools to direct teaching of what these young people mean by manners.

It is pitiful to discover how often really clever boys and girls who have a mastery over their special 'subjects' are gauche



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE STOMACH

and inarticulate outside this limited field. They do not know what to do with their hands, their feet, tongues or clothes, and their misery causes either a type of aggressiveness which makes them still less socially desirable, or a shyness which makes them a burden in any social group. In the secondary schools of the future and in the County College it would contribute greatly to the happiness of mankind if young people were given every opportunity to learn to speak—if the teaching of English, for example, should be with the main emphasis on speaking rather than reading, on reading rather than writing, and if they could learn in addition what all the boys in one of the most progressive Approved Schools in the country learn—‘the arts of courtesy’ and the practical truth that ‘courtesy is an act of kindness which has some degree of dignity’ and which contributes greatly to that ‘happiness which is an excellent *work* of body and of mind’.

But quite apart from this subject of social poise there are many other forms of informal education which can be approached through the stomach. To take only two very obvious examples, cookery and elementary dietetics. Many women, young and old, can never be persuaded to go to any form of cookery class, though the demonstrations conducted by many Local Authorities with the added encouragement of the Ministry of Food during the war years attracted women who would not formerly have indulged in this activity. But that was probably due rather more to the anxiety felt over rationing, and a desire to find out how to deal with rationed foods so that they would go further, than to any real desire to increase their skill as cooks. Numberless women, young and old, complain bitterly, and on the whole unjustly, that if they go to cookery classes they find that too large a part of the syllabus is given to ‘discussing vitamins and messing about with cheese straws’, and it is useless to maintain that this is not so when the conviction is firmly established.

The club canteen on the other hand, whether in the Community Centre, the British Restaurant, or the Youth Club, has given many girls and their mothers the opportunity to increase their skill as cooks, has given them a chance to learn

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE STOMACH

about balanced diets without hearing the objectionable words 'proteins' and 'vitamins', and has provided, in fact, an excellent opportunity for what are in effect cookery and household management classes. To mention the Catholic Youth Centre at Blackburn yet again, this club has been established in what was formerly a large furniture shop in the centre of the town. The ground floor has undergone practically no structural alterations. It has been turned into an extremely adult-looking restaurant, while the rear portion of the shop has been turned into a kitchen. A rota of 100 mothers has been formed who at the rate of two a night, with six girls to help them, cook everything that is eaten on the premises with the exception of the bread. In common with other towns in the north-west, Blackburn has a very large attendance at its Evening Institutes, and the restaurant part of this Youth Centre is opened each night so that boys and girls can go there straight from work and get a hot meal and a wash and brush-up before proceeding to their classes.

How great a boon this is can only be estimated when one remembers that in a very large number of towns the growth of dormitory living means that young students at Evening Institutes and Technical Colleges are often faced with the choice of making two extra journeys and only having time to swallow a cup of tea and a bun before their evening classes start, or going without a meal from midday until about ten or eleven at night on their return from evening classes. Many Evening Institutes themselves have established canteens for this reason, but with the best will in the world it cannot always be managed, since many a school used as an Evening Institute has no facilities of this kind at all, while in others, which it is true have domestic science rooms, these are in use for evening classes. One Evening Institute Head of my acquaintance always arrives at his centre immediately after his own school has closed down in order to keep kettles boiling on one gas ring for his students to make a hot drink as they arrive.

In Blackburn Youth Centre the menu for each night is chalked up outside on a board, and the dishes provided are those homely, familiar meals, tripe and onions, Lancashire hot

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE STOMACH

pot, etc. The more unfamiliar dishes are inserted as alternatives until they have established themselves in popular favour. When I last visited the centre they were cock-a-hoop over the recent purchase of a proper fish fryer, which meant that they could now provide fish and chips on Fridays with less pain and grief than before. Ninepence will buy a hot course, as much bread and butter as you can eat, one cake and a cup of tea or coffee. Each night, under the direction of the two mothers on duty, the six girls serve the meal and do what is necessary for the preparation of the main course for the next day and make and bake the cakes. They are engaging in practical cookery lessons and cookery of a sort that by its very homeliness will stand them in good stead when they have homes of their own.

After all, there is nothing dietetically wrong with most local dishes, and in food it is the familiar which usually gives the greatest pleasure. There is nothing really wrong with fish and chips. Dietetically it is an excellent meal. The only reason why it does not find favour among the experts and social workers is (or at least should be) that if it is bought at the shop round the corner at 1s. 2d per portion it had disastrous effects on the household budget.

This type of restaurant-youth centre is fulfilling many educational functions. The question of introducing people to more unfamiliar foods, particularly to foods which are 'good for you', has to be done extremely slowly. Much can be achieved if Club Leaders and others choose the more health-giving foods themselves, like the Aberdonian doctor with his milk drink, whom I have mentioned.

Another method is that of introducing different foods through the young people's interest in other countries. For instance, a series of clubs which have organised Canadian week-ends have sampled unfamiliar things which they might otherwise never have tried through a Canadian supper, and the same is true of many other week-end studies.

The vexed question of salads and raw vegetables is not so simple, though it is certainly half the battle if the salad looks attractive, and in many club canteens they now serve salads which are labelled 'Super salad', 'Very super salad' and 'Extremely super salad'. Dietetically they might well have been

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE STOMACH

termed 'Good for you salad', 'Better for you salad' and 'Still better for you salad', but the results would hardly have been the same. The more colourful they can be, the more it helps to get people to tackle them, and this is true of any attacks on the appetite. It is only necessary to be forced to spend a week or so in a dark room to realise what an effect colour has on the appetite. The most perfect meal eaten in darkness is apt to taste insipid, and this is equally true whether you are well or ill, a simple proof of which can be effected by taking a few meals blindfolded. Indeed the whole question of colour and appetite opens up fascinating possibilities, and in a 1945 investigation of British Restaurants it was found that the gaily coloured ones were on the whole very much better patronised, even when all other factors were taken into consideration, than those tricked out in hospital green and dirty chocolate.

Sometimes it is possible to approach the question of dietetics through a girl's interest in her appearance and through a boy's interest in his strength and physical prowess (though perhaps we do not always remember that many boys also long to be good-looking). Sometimes the approach can be made through an interest in the teeth, as in one club where a large majority of the members swore that they did not have the teeth for Ryvita, which gave the opportunity for a talk by a dentist and later on for a whole series of health talks.

A great deal of adult education could also be achieved through taking it to places where people already congregate to eat, and indeed in paying some attention to the eating places themselves—their appointments, the educative value of the surroundings—as well as the provision of both cultural entertainment and informal programmes of discussion, and later on perhaps of lectures.

It is not only the child in his school and the adolescent in his club canteen or pre-service unit mess who have become accustomed to 'eating out' of recent years. The Government encouragement of workers' canteens has meant that an increasingly large number of people are taking their mid-day meal away in the factory or in the British Restaurant, which has also played its part in providing people with a

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE STOMACH

cheap and quick service of meals outside the home. The increase of dining out is not, however, confined to those who have succumbed to it from private necessity or public encouragement. During the war years, at all income levels the habit of eating out and entertaining one's friends outside the home increased enormously.

It is probably fair to say that after World War One the bulk of the better-off upper middle classes ceased to entertain in their own homes for a variety of reasons, the lack of cheap domestic labour being by no means the least. After World War Two is it not only Mr. and Mrs. Orchidaceous who do their entertaining in public restaurants, clubs and hotels, but also Mr. and Mrs. Aspidistra who never thought of going out for a meal before the war. They would indeed have thought it either a wicked waste of money, or a sign of the absence of all the virtues of hospitality to take their friends and relations out to a meal.

In every variety of commercial hotel up and down the country it is now possible, particularly on Monday and Friday nights, to see large numbers of local residents taking their evening meal in the upstairs dining-room. In places as far apart, and with such different local traditions, as Darlington, Nottingham, Birmingham, Worcester and Cardiff, one may meet any number of ordinary, staid citizens indulging in a fish and chip supper in the public dining-rooms. During the war, if one had the time and the opportunity to get into conversation with these housewives in that great leveller the ladies' cloak-room, it was surprising how frequently one was told: 'We always go out on Mondays and Fridays, me and Dad. You see, I have to do a part-time job, and on Mondays what with trying to do the bits of washing and that you can't send to the laundry, and getting the shopping done on Fridays, I'm tired out and it is a real treat to come here and have something tasty and quiet without the bother of making it.' It was not only father and mother. When uncle was home on leave, or the sons and daughters came home for a brief forty-eight hours, it was quite common to see family parties being entertained in this way. It will be interesting, however, to see whether this shifting of entertaining



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE STOMACH

from the home to the public eating house, which came to stay in the higher income groups after the last war, will this time persist in the lower income groups. For, although the whole movement towards this type of entertaining is undoubtedly the result of the extra work which women had to turn their hands to in war-time, and the problems which beset them as the result of rationing, the habit of dining out, once formed, seems to die hard, and we may yet find that the café and restaurant habit will become just as much a feature of life in Britain as it is abroad.

From entertaining one's friends and relations, or even one's tired wife, at the local, it would be but a small step to providing some entertainment or informal education. There seems no reason, for example, why one should not borrow the smart night club floor show, and translate it into a really valuable cultural experience in dancing, music and drama.

This is by no means as dismal as one might imagine. Many a public house runs an astonishingly good 'popular' concert on Friday nights, and there is no real reason why there should not be a great extension of the Poetry in Pubs movement, side by side with a Poetry in Clubs movement. There is no valid reason why Shakespeare should not be performed in the middle of the floor in England as it was possible to see him performed in various parts of Germany in those happy days of the Weimar Republic when Germany still had time for music and drama.

One sometimes wonders whether a great deal of very real educational work could not be done by a group of visionaries who would open a chain of restaurants up and down the country, restaurants in which the experts, the artists, the lecturers, the musicians would act as waitresses and barmen. It would give them the opportunity of moving from table to table, of hearing the conversation, of providing decent music and first-class floor shows, living newspapers and educational flashes. It might then be possible to create an atmosphere in which community singing might spring naturally from groups at the various tables instead of being imposed artificially on groups of people sitting self-consciously on hard chairs in straight rows. Then indeed we would have come



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE STOMACH

to a stage in our civilisation when people might recognise culture as the stuff of life and not as something superimposed.

The old-fashioned smoking-concert, talent night and '1/- Popular' of many a public house revealed much talent in unsuspected places, but for all our talk about making music and listening to music there are few who will join classes for that purpose. A great deal of musical and literary education, however, could be indulged in by an Education Authority which had the courage—not to provide classes—but to hire out performers and instructors to places where people already congregate. The fact that it might encourage more people to congregate in public houses would not necessarily encourage more people to get drunk (which is a very different thing from drinking), especially if at the same time it were made compulsory for public houses which obtained such help with performers and instructors to serve things to eat and soft drinks. Moreover, the public house is only one of the places where people congregate and find nothing to do when they get there.

The Public House and the British Restaurant might between them do much to provide adult education, especially if the clients themselves were persuaded to do much of the planning through their own committees. In any group where the provision of food forms a focal point, committees become essential unless the concern is run solely for profit, and the committee is the best method of all of learning the art of self-government. Many a grumbler has been silenced by being put on the refreshment committee or the entertainment committee of the football society or the hockey club. Here he learns much of the trials that beset the provider of food for healthy appetites, an experience which is both valuable and salutary. The licensed club in many areas is already doing a great deal of work of this kind, and is a movement which is growing silently while other social and educational agencies are still talking about what they are going to do. There is much in the growth of such clubs which could fill one with far more misgiving than the public house which so many combine to rail against, but even here the constructive answer to the licensed club is the answer of giving people something still

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE STOMACH

more attractive than the entertainment and social life found there.

This brings us to a consideration of the whole question of the place of the parent in any organisation, whether school, technical college, evening institute, youth centre or pre-service unit. Those dealing with young people of any age from two or twenty are sometimes apt to ignore the existence of parents, or to relegate them to the position of those necessary evils which provide the raw material for their experiments. But whether we like it or not, the family group of mother, father and children has been, and still remains to a large extent, the main educational agency of mankind. In spite of all that the scaremongers would have us believe, the family tie is still very strong in the bulk of the nation. It is not the prerogative of the so-called 'good parent' either, if by that we mean the parent who gives the least trouble to the various authorities—school, employer or court. Court missionaries can multiply stories of matrimonial differences in which in spite of incredible disadvantages wives will 'go back on' separation orders for the sakes of keeping the home together. Not the least of the difficulties in the placing of juvenile labour, not only in normal times but also during the years of the depression and the war years, was that *transference* of labour which entails 'leaving home' is viewed with profound and genuine misgiving by parents and children alike.

In the Juvenile Court the mere threat of 'sending away' even the naughtiest boy, when even the parents admit it might be 'for his own good in the long run', is very often the signal for an immediate family reunion and a determined declaration to 'let bygones be bygones' all round. It is significant that a careful study of adoption cases reveals that it is seldom that any but illegitimate children are 'in the market', so to speak, for adoption. Widowed mothers of large families will undergo the most incredible hardships to keep their children about them rather than let them be legally adopted by even the most well-thought of and better-off relatives, let alone by strangers.

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE STOMACH

Many of the difficulties consequent upon war-time evacuation were due to the official disregard, or unawareness, of the strength of this family tie. A great deal of criticism was levelled at the parents who sent their children what seemed to their hostesses a disproportionate amount of pocket money and little or nothing to the hostess for the repair and renewal of clothing. Yet this disproportion was often caused by the feeling that at all events Johnny and Mary mustn't be among strangers 'without a penny in their pockets'—a far greater tragedy than having 'not a rag to your back'. The frequent visiting of evacuees sprang from the same strong sense of family unity, and many disturbed parents took their children back from perfectly good homes, to the horror of billeting officers, teachers and others, solely because they feared that the standards of the new home were 'too good' and that therefore the children were in danger of 'growing away from them'.

Many of our social difficulties are due to lack of understanding and sympathy for this strong, almost primitive clannishness, this desire to maintain the unity of the family, even to the extent so frequently found in opponents to evacuation of 'all dying together if we have to die'. When we have all finished blaming the teachers, their training, the school buildings, large classes, lack of equipment and all the other shortcomings of the educational system, we fall back on the parents; either they are blamed for being too anxious to force the pace at school, or for not being anxious enough, and so presumably undoing all the good work that is done in the school. According to some, the answer to this is to take as much responsibility from the parent as possible, to make the school not only a place of learning, but a place of feeding, dressing, doctoring and playing, to catch the child young (five is far too old!) and to keep it there until it is at least sixteen (preferably eighteen), and to entice it to spend as much of its leisure time as possible in Play Centres, Youth Centres, and the rest under the same type of professional guidance—guidance which will be based not on narrow intellectualism but on a solid material foundation of administering milk and meals, vitamin and serum, issuing boots

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE STOMACH

and uniforms and even providing school camps for the holidays.

Others see in this a definite danger. They declare that systems of insurance 'from the womb to the tomb', and in general this taking of more and more responsibility from the parent, are striking at the roots of our family life. Mr. Butler, in one of his parliamentary speeches on the 1944 Act, stated truly that 'the poor parent gets very little consideration in our education', though all he seemed to offer in one of the very few references made to parents throughout the long-drawn-out debates on the Education Bill was that 'we shall try to bring them in in making the choice for secondary opportunities' (almost the worst place for them to be brought in incidentally!) Yet under the Common Law of England the parent occupies a predominant position and the authority of the teacher over the child is recognised only as an authority delegated to him by the parents 'in loco parentis', i.e. 'in place of', not 'in preference to' the parent. It is true that many parents fail in the task of parenthood, but the sweeping reform of taking the child away from his parents at two and keeping him until eighteen seems a curious way of teaching either this generation or future generations of parents how, in fact, to be better parents. Indeed, the alarmists are probably right in calling attention to the danger of external formalism in the new educational policy, since nowhere is there a suggested plan for the co-operation of parent and teacher (and the education of the parent to that end is necessary).

Little can be gained, however, by taking sides with either teacher or parent in this matter of the education of the child. Mercifully the family tie is still strong, too strong very often for the liking of the teacher or of the social reformer, who finds in the mute if inglorious parent a passive resister to all his plans. But just because this tie is so strong a factor in our social life, if it were properly exploited and directed it could be a great factor in educational progress. The parent who is so often treated as the enemy of progress could well be its ally, as he is certainly the child's best (if occasionally misguided) friend.

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE STOMACH

There are really only three partners who matter very much in education, whether it begins at five and ends at fourteen, or begins at two and ends at eighteen: the parent, the child and the teacher. If only these three could work in partnership much might be done. In the past, however, this relationship has too often been like that of two dogs—parent and teacher—with a bone—the child.

It is surely lamentable for instance that few parents have any real understanding of the life and work of a present-day school, whether of the nursery or the senior department, since all schools, even the least progressive, have changed so radically in the last twenty years. If parents are expected to co-operate, they must be shown what is going on, and be invited to participate in the life of the school, as in the life of the Club or Youth Centre.

Few teachers, on the other hand, have any real understanding of the grave, almost instinctive distrust with which many parents regard them. Do nursery school and infant teachers know, for instance, how often the mother of a child just ready for school says: 'Yes, she'll be off to school after Easter. I'll be glad in a way—she's getting a handful' (or 'she needs to be with other children'), 'but—I'm always sorry to see them go. *They're not your own once they go to school.* They lose all their pretty ways and it's "Teacher this"—"Teacher that"—and "Teacher says . . .". Oh, of course we can dismiss it as jealousy, possessiveness or a hundred and one other things, but there it is—a fundamental feeling that the school robs you of something of your child.

This feeling is much deeper if the parents' own memories of school are not of the happiest. Listen to the parent who says: 'Me go and tell the Headmistress about Rosie's difficulties—not me, Miss! Last time I saw Miss X. was when she taught my class at City Road and she got me out in front of the class and caned me for something I never done.' Or Father who says: 'Me talk to old Y. about Ernie going to the Grammar School—not me! I was the dullest boy in his class he always said when he taught at St. Z.'s and I shouldn't be able to talk to him—not even now I shouldn't.'



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE STOMACH

Even if there has been no unfortunate relation such as this, there is always the definite tendency among human beings if they do not meet very often to make bogeys of each other—particularly if one set is vested with some sort of official or institutional authority. The use of the pronoun 'they', as so vaguely applied to all those in authority from Parliament downwards, is a symptom of this, but it frequently happens that if these two sets of people meet, both sides delight in the discovery that they share a common humanity. Consider the following illustration, which, though in some senses trivial, illustrates this point in parent-teacher relationship.

The children in a certain class had to buy material for their needlework to make garments which the children would eventually wear themselves. Now it is a common belief of parents, particularly of children in secondary schools, who are a little hard-pressed financially, that these charges are an opportunity for those in authority to make a little profit 'on the side' as it were. Teachers would probably be shocked and hurt if they knew how commonly this view is held. In this particular instance one father refused to pay the money, and wrote a most indignant letter on the subject. The Head Teacher replied by inviting him to come up to the school. The result was a pleasant interview in which he agreed not only to pay, but that the charge was 'value for money'. Teacher and parent passed on to a discussion on that particular child's education and he realised a little what staying on at school for a further year or so would mean to the child; and at this point comes the touching, but so relevant comment of the Head Teacher. 'When I read his letter you can imagine that I didn't like the man, but I note that at the end of my account of the interview I wrote "A nice man", which caused me to look back, and it was only then I noticed how often in the accounts of my interviews with parents—and these go back to 1932—I have written at the end something of this sort.'

One of the most pathetic stories of this lack of co-operation and understanding between parents is that which tells how splendidly parents helped in the matter of decorating lorries and so on for the Coronation and Jubilee celebrations, but



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE STOMACH

which goes on: 'The School Concert for which the Head and I must have made about 150 paper frocks, was a sad business. It ran for two nights, and some parents who had seen it the first night did not bother to send their children for the second night! Some of the results were amazing, however. Owing to on-the-spot recasting, two boys were left with the impression that they had to play the same part—the Knave of Hearts—and had a free fight at the opening of the scene for the spoils!'

Many parents feel that their children are being unduly harassed at school; they see no necessity for the numerous rules and regulations which the teachers see fit to impose, and which no-one ever bothers to explain to them. Home and school and youth organisations naturally tend to use the young person as a link between each other; only too often this is the only channel of communication; and young people are necessarily very imperfect links, by nature of their age, experience and imperfect knowledge of how to convey information correctly. They will quite innocently, and indeed not always *so* innocently, give a garbled version of what is said or done at school or at the Club, or give the teacher or leader a far from true picture of what 'My mother said' or 'My father thinks'. This is not surprising when we realise the extraordinary difficulty that even intelligent adults have in giving reports of what they see and hear. During evacuation one discovered very early that the delivery of messages by children was a most risky undertaking, and either letters had to be sent, or the billeted teachers had to be asked to make personal visits in order to interpret the billeted children's version of a message to the hostesses.

Again, so very often parents and others interested in their welfare want different things for children. As the self-made man type of father of a child in a very reputable High School put it: 'I want my Cynthia to be happy. She goes to that fine school with nice girls and good tennis courts to enjoy herself, and not to spend her evenings doing homework.' Another parent said: 'There's no need for Millicent to earn her living—indeed her father wouldn't like it. All we want is that she shall be taught to make a good and attractive wife to Mr.

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE STOMACH

Right when he comes along.' Too many teachers, on the other hand, give girls a feeling that they should seek every career but that of a wife and mother.

The result of all these many and varied misunderstandings is that the child, for whose good parent, teacher and Youth Leader are so devotedly working, is submitted to a great many stresses and strains and indeed very often serious emotional difficulties through a constant conflict of loyalties. If education is aiming at an integration of every aspect of life, something must be done and done quickly over this divorce between home and school, particularly when the school leaving age is raised into that period of adolescence when emotional strains are felt very keenly.

Even before the Butler Act, in many of our secondary schools the bulk of the children came from homes which were uncultured and often from homes where most unchild-like burdens were laid upon them by economic circumstances and illness. The staff was engaged in an endeavour to give these children the sort of education which was thought proper for the old High School type. From the purely mental point of view these children could usually take it; they had good brains and they were quick-witted, being the intellectual cream of the elementary schools; but the gap between the home and the school was so wide that even in matters of speech and manners almost everything taught in the school was an implied criticism of the home.

This will be a much more widespread problem when secondary education is given to all, since, even if only the Grammar School gives an academic training, the social differences will be even wider as between pupil and pupil. How can teachers avoid making children 'superior' about their homes and parents, while at the same time giving them higher standards? Time and time again mothers particularly come to one in distress because their daughters have become critical and 'superior', and enraged fathers tell of the finicky habits of speech of their secondary school sons. In these cases the conflict is clearly perceptible, in others it is not so marked but it is probably just as serious.

Grave misunderstanding about the aims and objects of the

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE STOMACH

various educational provisions are by no means confined to the parents of school children. Any Youth Leader can multiply cases of boys and girls who are excellent club members, but who come into conflict with their parents because of this very fact. The parents feel that their young people are spending too much time away from home, or they do not 'hold with all that they hear about the goings on' at the meetings, or even on the way there, and on the way back!

The survey made by Bristol Youth Service trainees who were trying to discover, among other things, why so many boys and girls were not taking part in any Youth Organisation makes it clear that home environment and family relationships play a much more considerable part in determining the use of the adolescent's leisure time than many people seem to realise. We are not always fully alive to the tensions set up over seemingly quite trivial things in connection with behaviour in the Youth Group and in the home. 'If you are going to wash up in that club canteen of yours you might just as well stop at home and wash up for me,' is a cry frequently heard, and who would dare to say that there is not some justification for it? As L. J. Barnes points out in his masterly survey of Youth Service in an English county: 'Somewhere in the home and parent-child relationship is hidden the master key to the problem of youth.'

Similar misunderstandings were brought to light during the registration and interviewing of sixteen-year-olds. Misconceptions ranged from those of the parent who sincerely believed that this registration was a thinly disguised attempt to inaugurate a Hitler Youth Movement, and who was therefore prepared to die in a ditch rather than see his offspring incorporated into it, to the parent who saw in this provision of leisure time activity a plot to rid him of his children's cheap labour. The following extracts from letters sent by parents to the interviewing panels, though amusing, clearly reveal this gross ignorance and suspicion:

'As to which of the youth organisations the boy would like to join in, I don't think you need trouble about this as he is a (surname here) and they have always fought for the Old

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE STOMACH

Country—South Africa, China, European and this One. He has three brothers in this (two overseas) his father in the last One (that's myself) four uncles and twelve cousins. This including brothers, myself and our boys, no conshies or hiding behind an A.R.P. badge while of military age, that's us.

'I am yours truly,  
'The Above . . . (Signed)'

Here is another:

'Contrary to being an "active member of a recognised youth organisation" she has a whole-time job, having the entire charge of seven cows and at the moment some of their calves too on her hands and plenty on her mind. When she is not doing this she is walking backwards across the fields and you will understand she gets very tired.'

This one is about a girl of seventeen who has just become a mother:

'Her interests are breast-feeding and she cannot be expected to do any more.'

Any teacher can give examples of most amusing letters written by parents:

'Now don't you go saying that my Mary must go to bed early—I am always in bed myself by 9.30.'

'Dear Miss — Am writing for my daughter Miss Rose Smith (aged 12). . . .'

'Please excuse Billy being away from school last week as I was confined. It wasn't his fault and it shan't happen again.'

But when we have finished laughing such stories reveal an alarming abyss yawning between home and all types of educative and recreative provision over which the young people dangle, bewildered victims of their many well-wishers.

The new Education Act, by providing secondary education for all, will increase the difficulties unless parent co-operation is achieved. How important the influence of the home upon education is we are shown by an enquiry into the cause of secondary school misfits in one rural area alone.<sup>1</sup> In a group of 344 cases of misfits it was recorded that, in 115 instances, conditions in the home were the main cause. Such conditions

<sup>1</sup>*The Times Educational Supplement*, 18 March 1944.



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE STOMACH

included poverty, with the resultant low standard of housing and nourishment, never-ending friction between parents producing mental distress and often disturbance in the children; the spoiling of only children by coddling; weak home influences; apathy to education; indifference and sometimes hostility to the claims of the school on pupils, and lastly a short-sighted commercial attitude to future careers. Such evidence of which this is but one example is conclusive proof, if such were needed, that when all children have secondary education, if a great deal of it is not to be wasted, full co-operation with the home is of primary importance. However adequate school buildings, however generous the amenities and the equipment, equality of opportunity is a mere catchword if the parent is not considered and educated (however informally) to work with the teacher for the good of the child.

Therefore in the interests of the child and of education something must be done. What can that something be?

'Adult education,' says one. But will the parents we really wish to help come to classes? 'Parents' Associations,' says another. But too many teachers whose views one cannot but respect say: 'We believe in this very little. We always found that the well-instructed and co-operative parents would come, but we could not get the others.'

Yet so many teachers and Youth Leaders tell of the grand work that can be done through the Parents' Association that it would seem something at which every school and youth organisation ought to aim, though the building up of such associations would obviously have to vary from place to place according to the varying characteristics and traditions of the neighbourhood. It seems hard to suggest adding yet another report to those which Head Teachers and Youth Organisers have to make, but perhaps it would help to reveal the need, if they had to make a return on 'co-operation with parents'.

Much of the work will be trying to patience and temper, though there will be the occasional sparks of humour which lighten the whole. Cases, for instance, like that of the much harassed mother who excused everything on the grounds that

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE STOMACH

her husband was an 'obliterate', or the one who found the cause of every difficulty in the observation: 'Well, you see sir, he is an inebriate child.' Much of the work too will seem to bear little fruit, especially at first, but in all social work—and education rightly conceived is the oldest and greatest form of social work—it is not the amount achieved but the goal to which one's footsteps are directed which is the important consideration.

A large number of schools and Youth Clubs have what they call 'open days' when the parents can come in as they like and attend what classes they choose, so that they can watch the school or club in action. The lessons or club activities are not of a special kind, but are what would be in progress at that particular time whether the parents were there or not. This is often the point at which to proceed to the next step of getting parents themselves to meet together. Many parents on such occasions are fascinated by certain lessons and techniques, and when the interest is thus awakened it should be fairly easy to get them to attend meetings at which each special activity can be explained, as well as why it is valuable for Jane and Johnny. These explanations must not be long and academic, and as far as possible the techniques of demonstration, programme display and actual classes must be used in illustration.

Many schools and Youth Clubs, that have tried this, speak with intense appreciation of the way in which parents, once interested, have helped with obtaining materials for equipment, and even in the making of it, so that the actual work has been improved by the direct help of the parents. Here again there is the two-way traffic.

A father on his first visit to a nursery school was fascinated by the simply constructed toys, and took notes, so that he could make some for the twins to play with at home. Another father was so struck by what seemed to him the devastatingly clever notion of putting little coat pegs at the level of the toddlers that he could hardly wait to get home to put up some little pegs and shoe racks in his own passage.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>A point brought out very well in the Ministry's film, *Children's Charter*.



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE STOMACH

From this point it is a simple matter to get the parents together to hear the headmaster, the school doctor (that most neglected and unjustly maligned of all our school officials), the probation officer, the employment officer, the club leader and others to talk about their jobs and what they are trying to do for the young people for whose good they should all work in partnership.

It is at this point that the further development of the Parents' Association would seem to be a problem. There are a number of head teachers already doing admirable pioneer work with Parents' Associations who declare quite firmly that such an association should be largely organised and run by the parents themselves; and that in the beginning at all events (this is a Parents' Association that has not evolved gradually on the lines indicated above) it is much better started from a social activity. To quote one Headmaster who has done wonders with his Parents' Association in a most difficult neighbourhood: 'I think it is better started almost as a Youth Centre—a too serious beginning is not likely to attract tired adults. Our Association aimed at little beyond Whist Drives in the early stages. This brings the parents in and also builds up the funds. Informal suppers held at school with a concert or show afterwards also helped. Once the parents have been brought together a formal membership card is offered to each, and a fee of 1/- charged. The more serious members then begin to suggest other activities, and we now have a dramatic society, a ladies' sewing class and a discussion group. The Association has already provided the school with a large greenhouse, taken much interest in the Pig Club, given £10 to the sports fund and provided a coach for the boys' cricket club.

'The parents delight in doing active jobs for the school. They help with properties and dress for plays, and intend to make a fully equipped stage for the school, and the chairman of the committee himself gives up Saturday afternoons and some evenings to coaching the boys at cricket.

'The Chairman, Secretary and other officials should under all circumstances be the parents and not the teachers. The Headmaster and staff, or Club Leader and helpers, should be ex-officio members of all committees and should attend con-

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE STOMACH

stantly, but I am firmly convinced that the promulgation of policy and the hard work of carrying it out should be left to the parents. Advice and assistance will be constantly sought, and a great burden of work will fall on the professional, but the parents who are, also, responsible and capable adults, like to feel that (outwardly at any rate) the Association is their own creation and pride. We have found that the difficulty is not to evoke new ideas and enthusiasms once the Association really got under way, but to keep the activities within reasonable limits of time and energy.

'It is wise to have a strict rule to the effect that the Association shall in no circumstances interfere in discipline or matters concerning the running of the school. Sensible parents welcome this as a safeguard established in the interests of all.'

But it is about this very question of the discipline and running of the school, Club or Youth Organisation that the parents *should* be concerned. Only by discussing such problems as discipline, homework, the process of learning, formation of character, as well as by private discussion of the individual boy or girl, can Parent-Teacher-Leader contacts fulfil the integrating process which is surely their real function. The Headmaster quoted above does himself less than justice in his concluding sentence, because his parents are, in fact, friends and consultants.

It is easy to understand why many teachers and Youth Leaders are diffident about starting an organisation which may resolve itself into yet another social gathering for the community or else a general interference group. As one Head Teacher expresses it: 'Whist drives seem to me entirely undesirable, and this is not just because I detest them anyhow. Quite apart from their being right away from the main purpose, people are not at their best at such things and they do not learn to like and understand one another at them—in fact quite the opposite.' Equally diffident are those who feel that in starting up an organisation of this kind they will be preparing yet another 'rod for their own backs' in the way of interference and criticism which will be hampering rather than helpful. It is undeniable that any type of Parents' Association will involve some rather difficult give and take.

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE STOMACH

But let us go back to the main reason for the endeavour to develop these contacts. Surely the only real and valid reason, indeed the imperative task, is to increase the teachers', Youth Leaders' and parents' understanding and so to increase the support that young people may receive that all alike shall be a source of power to him, or rather perhaps a generative source of power from which he can draw strength. If one cuts a person's life into separate and possibly conflicting parts, he is weakened and confused. Home, school and Youth Organisation must aim therefore at more or less the same things and a similar method of achieving them—this is of paramount importance. Each must, therefore, know what the other is aiming at, and make every effort to understand each other's methods of trying to obtain it. These contacts would have a very wholesome effect on the tendency to over-theorise, into which teachers, social workers and psychologists are liable to fall by the very nature of their work. It is always salutary, no matter what our profession, to have to set forth our professional ideas to someone *not* in the profession, especially when it is a career connected with human beings.

All the way through such a relationship, however, must run this feeling of co-operation that implies a balance between both sides. It is just this balance which is so delicate. The Parents' Association may be deflected from its true purpose, which is educational in its widest sense, if the meetings are merely a social event, and equally if the parents run the association too independently. It is not being unfair to parents to say this. It would seem wiser therefore (at any rate until in a generation or so's time when we are all more practised in this matter of intelligent co-operation) if the organisation is neither formal nor elaborate. The more formal and elaborate it is, the more likely parents are to demand control. There is a natural desire in all of us for office, even of a most small and humble variety, yet, as the Headmaster quoted above suggested, there is also the necessity to see to it that parents feel as important as the teachers and Youth Leaders.

It is with this end in view that one Headmaster with many years' experience of such parent-teacher contacts suggests that the head of the school should be in control of the aims and

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE STOMACH

objects of the meeting, though he does not mean controlling them so as to stifle any criticism of the doings of the school (a difficult balance to achieve). Grievances brought into the open can be met and removed for all except the most unreasonable parents, and parents are no more congenitally unreasonable than any other section of society.

An informal organisation also allows for meetings of various kinds which seem valuable. One Head Teacher says that he likes to have meetings occasionally for the parents of certain age groups only. For instance, it is valuable to have a meeting for the parents of 'new boys' only (and, of course, new girls), to explain the general organisation of the school. This meeting is of intense interest and value to those particular parents, but would be boring in the extreme for parents whose children had been in the school for some years and who were therefore knowledgeable on these points. Many of the parents' grievances about 'different sorts of shoes', 'games charges' and other incidental expenses could be removed in this way, not to mention a great deal of the trouble about homework, the annual camp and the time they get home from Clubs after a dance or a Dramatic Society rehearsal!

In one south-west Club they recently had a most interesting experiment with parents' discussion groups on religious education, and in one town in the north-west the Sunday-school teachers were also invited to co-operate in similar meetings.

Again, valuable meetings can be held to discuss such things as sex education for a particular age group, and all the manifold problems of adolescence which worry so many parents who feel that their children are 'unnatural' and 'ungrateful' and 'growing away from them' at such times. The fact that these difficulties are a great grief to many parents is revealed whenever press articles appear on the parent-child problem. There invariably follows a positive 'fan mail' of touchingly grateful parents, who, having had their own particular fear exposed, or maybe explained, are both relieved and anxious to be helpful. They are much more capable of being patient when they realise that the 'difficult phase' is not only common and natural, but also temporary. It is true that many parents realise much of this from recollections of their own difficulties,

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE STOMACH

but many more forget, and many of the best parents feel that *their* difficulties were due to faulty handling, while *their* children, of course, do not suffer that disadvantage!

Nevertheless, there are still those teachers who are dubious, whose main line of argument, like that of the Head Teacher quoted earlier, is that only the 'converted' will come to these meetings. But although there is certainly a great deal of initial apathy to overcome, it can be done. To quote again:

'The Association here had a most disappointing first eighteen months, but since that time has grown splendidly. Essential is a keen Committee and a capable Chairman. With such a nucleus an Association is almost sure to flourish.

'The initial apathy was overcome by means of a determined street by street canvass by keen members—lists of addresses supplied by the school. This was helped by a general meeting called at the beginning of each school year, to which parents were invited by means of a letter from the Headmaster. This usually brings in a good proportion of the first-year boys. The letters must be sent by post—hand delivery is useless because the boys fail to deliver the letters.

'It must be remembered that many parents are unreachable—nothing on earth would make them join a Parents' Association. With those who are indifferent but *might* join, a successful and vigorous association is the most potent propaganda. They are infected with the enthusiasm and zeal of those who are already members. So long as there is in existence a nucleus of enterprising members, the group will grow. I think that our own greatest leap forward was when we made almost the entire body of existing members of the hitherto small association into Committee Members—the committee was larger than really necessary, but all members now had to *do* something to make the association flourish; it was no longer possible to sit back and leave it to others. They felt, too, that they had to bring in the indifferent, and so made a point of asking personally those with whom they were acquainted. There is no golden rule to convert the unconverted. As with disciples of the Church, one must have above all faith that the news is worth proclaiming, showing evidence in ourselves of the benefits that are there for those who will partake.



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE STOMACH

‘Finally, I would not admit the logic of those who give up Parents’ Associations because only “good” parents come. The implication that all parents who come are “good” is flagrantly an error. Some come because they are selfish and want their child to have preference given to him over others. Some come for amusement. Our job is not to analyse motives, dividing sheep from goats, but rather to tend the flock as it is, so that its well-being will surely draw others, white, grey, black, or even goats, within the fold.

‘Again we must realise that the good parents may be “converted” in the sense that they are willing to come to Parents’ Meetings, but they are not by any means always “converted” in the sense that they agree to everything; in fact it is often the “good” parent who asks difficult questions. As to methods of getting at the others, I certainly think that propaganda by the parents who do come is one of the best ways. I also suggest personal interviews of a very friendly and simple kind and also asking young people to encourage their parents to come; of course a number of them would rather their parents didn’t, so you would have to be careful of your method of approach.

‘Simple letters asking for expressions of opinion on certain problems may do some good, as long as they are worded in such a way that they do not require lengthy answers but can be met by not much more than Yes or No. But I don’t think we must expect too much from Parent contacts at first; a great deal is against it, tradition, ignorance, social conditions. It is all part of the new development of education and of its setting and, like all the other education developments we hope for, it must have creative handling and management if it is to grow fully and constructively.’

There is yet another aspect of this work. Those who have tried it say that Parent-Teacher contacts and meetings have a perceptible influence on that very vexed question of school and Clubs attendance; and since there is no reason to suppose that the raising of the school leaving age will diminish this problem, here again is a function of Parents’ Meetings which cannot be ignored. Welcome as a policy of secondary education for everyone is, we cannot close our eyes to the fact



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE STOMACH

that the experience of America and Russia points to the fact that absenteeism tends to increase rather than diminish in the 13-16 age group.

Enforcement of the law relating to school attendance will be an increasing necessity. With full regard to the use of such a word, the present widespread evasion of school attendance regulations is scandalous. To take but one instance, a parent was before the magistrates on no fewer than four occasions charged with failing to ensure that his child attended school regularly. On each occasion the fine imposed was 5/-,<sup>1</sup> less than the boy could earn in a single morning at the market. Attendance officers have the greatest difficulty in persuading the local committees to prosecute even in the most flagrant cases of non-attendance. The contempt for this law, the one which of all laws is most familiar to the child population, breeds contempt for authority and consequently is not without its effects on juvenile delinquency. A disturbing feature is that the worst cases of irregularity in attendance are children from the poorly nourished, ill cared for, mentally backward section of the school—just those who have most need of regular attendance. This may be evidence that our schools do little to satisfy the needs of these poorer mental types and, in fact, the usual school programme of pseudo-literary work positively discourages them and arouses in them an aversion to school. The tendency also persists, however, in those schools which try to make the work of these unfortunates as active and happy as possible; and one is bound to see in it evidence of selfishness and neglect on the part of certain types of parents—neglect which in itself is often the main cause of the child's backwardness.

In a different fashion youth organisations are often criticised because those very young people who would benefit most—the delinquents—those from poor homes and those with a tendency to 'drift' are not vigorously pursued and encouraged to join. Until parents see the value of such organisations for their young people it is impossible to get co-operation from the home and a definite encouragement of attendance on the parents' side.

<sup>1</sup>The possible fine which can be imposed is increased by the 1944 Education Act.

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE STOMACH

Here again enlightened public opinion means first and foremost enlightened parent opinion.

Parent education, however humbly started, is surely an admirable method of tackling the general suspicion which be-fogs all types of education, a method of helping towards that integration of the life of the community to which we pay so much lip service, and a method too of continued education through life. We talk a great deal about adult education. But where do we begin? The young mother goes to the ante-natal and child welfare clinics, and gets excellent advice and education there, but the toddler stage, the baby stage, the adolescent stage are all difficult ones to cope with, and the parent who would 'feel a fool' going to parentcraft classes, when he has three children of various ages, is nevertheless ready and happy to pick up information and hints through the school or club which his offspring attend.

Yet another much needed reform, co-operation with the School Medical Services, could be achieved through the Parents' Meeting. Children who are hungry cannot learn properly, and children who are not well cannot take full advantage of the educational services provided for them. These are two of the major discoveries of the century, and, it would seem, self-evident matters of common sense to the average parent. We must not, however, lose sight of the fact that the establishment of the School Meals Service in 1904 and the School Medical Service in 1908 were not due to the agitation of interfering social busybodies who desired to remove from parents the duty of looking after and being responsible for their own children. These reforms arose from the conviction of hard-headed rate-payers, as represented on the old School Management Boards and Education Committees, that a certain standard of health and nutrition among pupils is essential if teachers are to do their work properly. In other words it is a waste of money to try to educate children if they are ill and hungry.

It is well to emphasise this point since the provision of secondary education for all, the raising of the school leaving age, the establishment of part-time continued education and all the other reforms are not likely to meet with their full meed

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE STOMACH

of success unless the health and well-being of the children is still a major concern of the Education Authority.

Unfortunately this section of the 1944 Education Act which deals with questions of health, medical inspection and treatment is one of the least satisfactory sections. This is probably due to the fact that the Health Services generally are being re-organised, but it seems rather sad that the 'power to ensure cleanliness', the functions of the 'dirty nurse' (as she is somewhat devastatingly designated in many parts of the country) receive practically two pages of attention in the Act, whereas the rest of the medical provision is confined to a page.

Under the new Act all forms of treatment except treatment at home must be provided by Local Education Authorities for pupils at any school they maintain. This necessitates the provision of special forms of treatment, and assisting pupils to obtain such treatment at hospitals, clinics, and other agencies. Many authorities will have to extend their arrangements to cover forms of treatment for which there are no existing facilities. Arrangements made by Education Authorities will thus form a nucleus for the clinic services of the National Health Service, but it is to be hoped that they will not be taken over entirely, and that there will be no undue separation of the school medical service of inspection from that of treatment. Any such separation would entail grave danger to the health of the child and the co-operation of the parent. In the past the School Medical Service has suffered from two grave handicaps, both of them due in the main to inadequate staffing.

In the first place, there have not been enough school doctors, so that in most parts of the country the normal child is only medically examined three times during its school career from five to fourteen, and very often these inspections have perforce to be done very rapidly, because of the large numbers each doctor has to handle in one visit. In some cases it means inspecting one child a minute. This inevitably means that the school medical inspection is a routine search for recognised signs and symptoms. The child is regarded as an aggregate of systems each one of which is prone to known pathological processes, and in the absence of definite evidence of disease in any of these systems it is assumed that the child is healthy.

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE STOMACH

In the second place, no Local Education Authority has the requisite powers to insist that all children recommended for treatment shall, in fact, get that treatment. No-one would suggest that education authorities should be given the power to override the wishes and sincere prejudices of parents concerning the treatment of their children, but the position is indeed ludicrous when the parents of Nellie Nitwit can be prosecuted for not seeing to it that the child's head is kept free from vermin (the child can be excluded from school and the parent then summoned to show cause why . . .), but the parents of Adelaide Adams can allow Adelaide's adenoids to choke her, and nothing can be done if Mrs. Adams doesn't 'hold with' operations.

This means that until the school doctors have the time, the patience and the understanding necessary to do a great deal of follow-up work through parent-interviewing and parent-education, much of their work is wasted. Much could be done by intensifying the activities of the school nursing service. A daily visit by a school nurse to each school could be made the usual practice, and the nurse could perform an equally valuable function by securing contact between the School Medical Service and the homes, especially if (as the school and health services become more closely combined) the practice of having school nurses who are also health visitors will become more general.

How much parent-education is still necessary can be illustrated from the correspondence of any head teacher or school doctor. These extracts, for instance, are dated 1943, not 1913:

'I don't think Johnny needs glasses—he tried his grandmother's on last night, and he couldn't see nothing.'

'Bertie's tooth in his top is all right now, but the one in his bottom hurts dreadfully.'

'The following note was received from a parent by a Headmaster in reply to a request for observations on Sex Education through films in schools:

"About them hygiene films, I don't want my Lily to have anything to do with them. She don't need to know anything below the waist, moreover it puts her off her meals."'

Here we have another argument for the Parents' Meeting, at which from time to time the school doctors and the school

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE STOMACH

nurses should have opportunities to give informal talks to parents so that they would be more willing and anxious to co-operate. In many areas, particularly in poorer ones, parents are genuinely alarmed when they are asked to attend the School Clinic about their children's ailments; some are alarmed because they are always on the defensive when brought into contact with authority, others because they foresee a great deal of 'expense' which they can ill afford. They have no idea how much can be provided free if they cannot pay for it, and they are afraid to enquire for fear of finding themselves committed to the treatment through sheer nervous panic. Incidentally, it is useless to talk to people about being 'penny wise and pound foolish' if they haven't any spare pennies! Other parents are abysmally ignorant about the value of preventive treatment and are inclined to feel that such treatment is just a lot of fussy nonsense. This is particularly true of dental treatment. 'All this filling nonsense!' as one mother put it. 'What I say is, wait till their teeth are rotten and then pull them out. Teeth is nothing but a nuisance from the time you get them till you lose them.'

With regard to the School Dental Service, there are probably few areas where more than about two per cent of the children at the age of twelve have naturally sound teeth. The task of providing treatment for this most widespread of all defects is formidable, and the staff required clearly outnumber that needed for all other conditions combined. In 1938 the number of school dentists was only a fraction of what was needed for a comprehensive service.

The success of any dental scheme depends on securing the confidence of the parents. It should be the aim of the school medical officer to enlist the co-operation of the teachers, the Youth Leaders and the members of the education Committee. The importance of dental treatment is particularly great in the case of the 15-18 age group, which will be brought within the scope of medical inspection and treatment when County Colleges are established. Indeed, this age group is one of the most susceptible to certain illnesses.

Other parents resent what they feel to be the patronising nature of any 'clinic', and it is by no means uncommon for



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE STOMACH

teachers to receive messages couched in most indignant terms at the very suggestion that these parents should take advantage of the advice and service offered by the school doctor. To take but one instance: A boy had some suspicious spots on his legs. He was sent home with a form for the Clinic requesting his mother to take him for examination. In the afternoon the boy returned with the form. On the back was written: 'We have a private doctor. I do not take *my* children to the Clinic.' The Headmaster endorsed her remark with 'I do' and once more sent the boy home.

Parents' Meetings would help in cases of this sort; it is unfair to expect that a busy doctor should have to cope with every parent of every child needing treatment. At the moment many school doctors, to their eternal credit, have established what almost amounts to a Parents' Advice Bureau, and on 'clinic afternoons' it is a joy to visit such clinics, and see tired, worried and anxious parents helped and soothed. Often through sheer ignorance parents do not carry out the home treatment properly. Often through sheer laziness or stupidity they carry it out perfunctorily, often they lose heart if treatment does not bring rapid cures (we are all inclined to endure our ills for months and then expect a doctor to work a miracle of healing in a week).

It is infuriating for an expert to see a child's health suffering because of what may seem at the first impatient glance sheer folly and neglect; and many school doctors lose heart, others lose their tempers, and in both cases thereby lose what little influence they may have on the parents. It is time that the public learnt the difficulties with which school medical work is fraught, and it is time that having learnt they should insist on more generous provision of staff so that school doctors, like their colleagues at the Child Guidance clinics, shall have the necessary time at their disposal to give the parent the treatment and attention necessary if the parent is to co-operate in the treatment of the child.

Many people perhaps do not realise how much the School Medical Services embrace. This is the field covered by one School Medical Officer in a borough with a population of 67,000. She writes as follows:

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE STOMACH

'I wonder if people know all the little oddments that the school medical service embraces besides ordinary routine inspection in schools and clinics. Perhaps I had better enumerate as many as I can think of.

'There is the normal child who gives us very little trouble except for tonsils and adenoids, etc., which we arrange to have done by a specialist. They also attend for minor ailments such as scratches, cuts, discharging ears, etc. These are treated at a minor ailment clinic, of which we have four.

'Flat feet, curvatures, rheumatism, chilblains, hay fever, etc., are treated in the orthopaedic department which is attended once a month by a specialist who sees any major defects which, if necessary, are admitted to hospitals. The Education Committee provides special boots and artificial limbs, etc., in cases of necessity.

'Another specialist service to which we have access is the "eye man" to whom we refer any cases requiring extra attention such as squints or major visual defects.

'Any gross defects of the ear, nose and throat which cannot be treated at the clinic are referred to a specialist who arranges for treatment.

'Then there are all the defective children—children who are too deaf to be taught in an elementary school, and occasionally dumb children, are found places in special schools. Blind or partially sighted children in whom sight is too defective for the child to be taught in an ordinary school are also found places in special schools. Delicate children are referred mainly to the Open Air School where they have three meals a day, breakfast, lunch and tea, a weekly bath, regulated rest and they are taught daily hygiene such as cleaning their teeth, etc. Each child has its own towel, comb and toothbrush, stretcher bed and blanket.

'On occasion we send children to residential schools for physically defective children. We sent away an asthma case quite recently. The boy had no asthma when he was away from home and it was therefore obviously a psychological situation in the home which caused his asthma. Mentally defective children, when educable, are also found places in residential institutions. If ineducable in the ordinary sense of

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE STOMACH

the word they either go to the Occupation Centre where daily they are taught such things as rug making, tapestry work, etc., or if they are very difficult, or if their parents wish, they are found places in institutions. There is a crying need here for a special school for dull and backward children. We have progressed a certain amount inasmuch as we now have the rudiments of a Child Guidance Clinic in the form of an educational psychologist.

'We also have a speech therapist and both these people work in collaboration with this department.

'Watch is also kept of the employment of children and street traders, i.e., newspaper boys, are examined by me, also children in entertainments who need their licence renewed.

'We have at the present time clinics for the treatment of scabies and one for the treatment of ringworm. When necessary cases of ringworm are sent for X-ray treatment.

'Then there is the dental service and we supply Oil and Malt Emulsion or Virol and sunlight treatment when necessary and free milk and meals when home circumstances warrant. We also have regular clinics for immunisation against diphtheria.

'I have omitted to mention the Nursery School. I go there once a month as I do to the Open Air School. We now also have a large number of children in nursery classes.'

Now this is obviously quite a job, yet this particular woman knows her parents, she takes about as much trouble with them as over her little patients themselves, and she is always working against time. She is one of many thousands who would be immeasurably helped in a fine job if Parents' Meetings, through their education programme, could be made interested in her work, if they could see in her a valuable ally in the constant war against dirt and disease which all parents, even the defeated, have to wage. Virulent diseases and chronic ill-health among children have been largely wiped out, and some of their more obvious causes removed or diminished. Now a new stage, involving formidable tasks, lies ahead. Among these are the investigation and removal of the many factors—particularly social and environmental factors—predisposing to physical ill-health and disease among children, which are as yet not fully understood; a greatly expanded investigation of the causes and

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE STOMACH

cure of mental ill-health; the building up of a body of tested knowledge concerning the promotion of positive health.

In many youth groups where parent co-operation has been achieved, it has already been found that the study of educational problems through the life of the youth organisation itself has led to an increased interest in the duty of citizenship as a whole. It has become commonplace to pour scorn on the non-progressive attitude of some members of Education Committees, and it is probably true that in the matter of reforms the effect on the rates sometimes carries more weight than a consideration of the effect on the child. There is no indication that the implementation of the new Education Act will do very much to decrease that tendency. One cannot help wondering, however, whether a keen and vigorous policy in the matter of Parents' Meetings or Associations—call them what you will—might not lead eventually to the growth of 'associations of parents' associations' which would be strong and competent enough to demand and provide suitable parent representation on Education Committees themselves.

It is not fair to dismiss this demand for parent representation by pointing out that Education Committees can hardly fail to number many parents among their present ranks; too frequently, though there are parents, either their children are no longer scholars in the schools they are administering, or they never were in attendance at those schools. It would make a considerable difference if only a few of the co-opted membership places on Education Committees could be specifically reserved for parents whose children were still in attendance at the schools administered by the Local Authority. It might often result in a change of heart and a more progressive attitude. But such parent representation must not only be composed of good-hearted parents, anxious to get the best possible for their children, they should also be well-informed on educational matters and experienced committee members. The Parents' Association could be an excellent training ground in both these requirements.

Finally, there is yet another interesting possibility in the widespread development of the parent meeting. It is just possible

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE STOMACH

that the best approach to many of the so-called unapproachable parents is through the more loosely organised Youth Centre or Community Centre or voluntary youth group. Many a youth club has done a first class piece of parent education, for instance, by running a mothers' evening with a fish and chip supper on a Monday night. Monday is washing day in most homes, and it is the evening in the week when a mother appreciates a meal, which she has not had to cope with herself, more perhaps than on any other night (unless, of course, she comes from that dismal group of housewives who have to do their washing and ironing on the same day because they are always ill the next day!). Such suppers are preceded by simple talks, talks on common infections and how to recognise them, or a short film show which may either be of the 'Day in the Life of a Toddler' variety, or dealing with the exploits of 'Dirty Bertie', or may even be a Youth Hostel or a camping film, which if seen fairly well in advance may convert some of the mothers to allowing their young people to attend a camp in the summer.

Such meetings carried on over a period of years have gradually gone a long way in informal education, and it is from such mothers and fathers that very often one's best helpers are recruited.

One need never be at a loss for mothers to help in the canteen or fathers to help with the camp, with woodwork, with the training of the football team or the 'gaffering' of the gardening squad, if one is prepared to give something in the way of relaxation and sensible entertainment and information to those parents from whom one later hopes to gain in the way of help. Because he came to the Monday night fish and chip supper with his wife, an old rascal, who might have been first cousin to Falstaff, gradually became the self-appointed repairs manager of one club, not only doing the jobs himself, but showing groups of boys how to do them too.

Again, much of the child neglect, and a certain proportion even of the cruelty that we hear so much about from time to time, are the result of ignorance and of that particular brand of inefficiency and fecklessness that so often gives rise to an unreasonable and unreasoned impatience, rather than to any



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE STOMACH

really sadistic element in the nature of most of these unhappy parents. Many mothers and fathers simply do not know how to manage, and there is just no place where they can be taught. For instance, only a little while ago when a mother who had been prosecuted at the instigation of the N.S.P.C.C. was sentenced to learn child care so that she might be better able to cope with her neglected baby, the magistrates who had made this decision were horrified to discover that there was no place where such a sentence might be carried out. Indeed the whole country was scoured before a Salvation Army Hostel came to the rescue, and it is only now that attention has been focussed upon this point that a voluntary committee has been established to consider the possibilities of raising funds for an institution of this kind.

Again, it is a commonplace to say that much juvenile delinquency is really parent delinquency, and there might be quite a good deal to be said for experimenting in this country on the lines of the San Francisco Parental School. This school was established in 1943 by Mr. George Jarrett, a police reporter in San Francisco, aided by juvenile court and public school officials. The main purpose of the school is to promote better child care by giving parents not only a greater appreciation of their responsibilities and opportunities, but practical information which may help in the solution of their family problems. The school has developed into a special sort of night school for delinquent parents. Private social agencies, City truant officers, and the courts, refer parents to the school, and for eight successive weeks, and longer if necessary, such parents hear lectures by experts on the care and training of children, the responsibilities of parents, and the establishment and maintenance of healthy home life.

The interesting thing is that up to date the children of parents who have been to this school have never come before the courts again, and the school has never had a single case needing repeated lectures. The meetings are held in the auditorium in the Health Building of San Francisco's imposing civic centre, and one of the main successes of the school is that of encouraging the people in the class into becoming a friendly, corporate whole. They come in twos and threes, and in a rather

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE STOMACH

shamefaced fashion at first, but on considering their problems with the encouragement of a friendly lecturer they learn from one another as well as from him. The whole school is a part of the extension work of the City's school system, and so far it has met with approval from everyone, and particularly from the magistrates since it has given them a humane and constructive way to handle domestic difficulties.

It is too early as yet to estimate any possible effect this experiment may have on juvenile crime, but its history so far is extremely encouraging, and it is well to remember that three types of parents are actually catered for: parents of delinquent children, who are found guilty of 'contributing' to the delinquency; parents who are themselves delinquent, and who have small children growing up under their care; and thirdly parents who voluntarily attend because the thing seems to them valuable. While one might not be able, for various reasons, to start up classes of this kind in many places in this country, it is perhaps not unreasonable to suggest that if we could really get parent education going in connection with schools and youth organisations it might be possible to deal with a certain number of delinquent parents in these groups.

After all, one cannot complain that parents are not fit to have children if there is nowhere where they may go to be fitted for such tasks. Adult education might secure a great stimulus through these meetings. At the Parents' Meetings people could be informed of those courses and lectures likely to interest them, and so other adult classes might be 'fed'.

Let us remember in all humility, however, that the Women's Institute with its monthly meeting, is the only educational activity in many a rural area. It is this splendid women's organisation that has been responsible for brightening the lives of countless women, for making an incalculable contribution to the war effort in the matter of acting as distributive agencies for everything from orange juice to make and mend and children's shoe exchanges, for fruit preserving and bottling and for enquiring into local conditions concerning almost everything from sanitation to old village sights.

Many Evening Institute teachers are also doing marvellous

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE STOMACH

work with their afternoon mothers' classes, and there is no reason why similar courses should not be arranged for fathers in the evenings. One of these splendid Evening Institute teachers declares that her suburban housewife classes are, in her view, one of the most satisfactory sides of education to which she has turned her hand.

Theoretically the 'Mother' is much extolled, in practice she is a sadly neglected member of the community. The average suburban housewife devotes ten to twelve years of her life to rearing her children on an inadequate income. The 'snob' element is pretty deep, and she sacrifices herself in an effort to let her children 'rise' in the world. The result is that when her children reach an age when they go out to work, she herself is exhausted and presents a pretty poor specimen. Most satisfactory results can be achieved with this section of the community. Time and time again diffident, self-effacing, shabby, middle-aged women have plucked up courage to join afternoon classes. 'We have been pleased', says one head of such classes, 'to see these women turn into confident, smart, self-respecting members of the community. The changed attitude of the children to the mothers is encouraging, the despised mother has become an attractive companion. Our instructors have developed a technique in teaching these mothers whose minds have become rusty, and the education is carried out in many subtle ways. Over the mid-afternoon cup of tea (an invaluable asset in creating an atmosphere) discussions often develop and a wise instructor can encourage neighbourliness, citizenship and the give and take of working in a community. Necessarily, in war-time, most of our work was practical "make and mend" but we are looking forward to the time when we can stimulate taste in music, literature and the arts.

'Our big handicap is accommodation. For the scheme to be of lasting benefit "a place of one's own" for meetings is essential. At present odd classes are held in inadequate Church halls and spare (very few) classrooms in elementary schools. If army huts could be used for this purpose, the scope of the work could be extended. Women have responded in an amazing way to these classes, held under such trying conditions. It can be imagined what a response we should get if we could run mothers' colleges

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE STOMACH

or clubs, non-sectarian, non-political. I have had repeated testimony as to the value of these afternoon classes. Again and again the phrase has been used: "I can't tell you what these classes mean to me!" They have:

- '1. "Saved me from a nervous breakdown."
- '2. "Given me a new aspect of living."
- '3. "Given me new and interesting friendships."'

This is but one of thousands of similar cases, but consider how much intercommunication might grow up between Parents' Meetings, where the personal problem is the main issue, and the Adult Classes, where interests awakened in the school group might be pursued still further. As one father put it: 'I listened to that Music chap talking at Bill's school at those parents' meetings, and when I heard he had an evening class I thought, well, I'll jolly well join that. After all, why should Bill have all the good things?' Why, indeed?

If parents are by tradition the oldest members of the teaching profession, it is time that they and the professional met more frequently. The majority of parents themselves no longer assume that having so to speak fitted the child out with a chassis, they have exclusive rights in the whole model, but neither have teachers and Youth Leaders exclusive rights. The whole matter of growing up is one of a long-term apprenticeship to life learned against a background of family life; it means companionship in the home as well as those outside associations which are also part of the right of every member of the family.

There has been much too much lip service paid to 'bringing the parents in'. When all has been said the best practical way of bringing them still remains to give them something to eat. Who is to say how much of the success of the Welfare clinics is not due to the cup-of-tea-and-a-biscuit basis on which they are run?

The deep spiritual significance in the breaking of bread together has been recognised from time immemorial by primitive tribes. The communal meal is the central and focal point of Christian worship. No-one was more insistent than Christ that those who listened to him should have something to eat.

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE STOMACH

But times have changed, and the more uplifting the society the less chance there is that anyone will enquire into whether even the lecturer has had anything to eat, let alone the audience! Yet the offering of food, the virtue of hospitality, is one that is understood in the poorest of homes in both Western and Eastern civilisations.

The heads of many schools have become increasingly aware of this, and where in co-operation with the Domestic Science teachers they are able to give their pupils practice in the art of preparing and serving meals for visitors at week-end gatherings of one kind and another, it is quite moving to see how it affects the young people themselves. The same thing is true of the club which can entertain from time to time. The offering of food is at once one of the most common and yet the greatest tribute which ordinary people can pay one another. It may, of course, from time to time involve one in the most embarrassing situations. For instance a settlement, which was established in the coloured quarter of one of our toughest ports, once befriended the motherless twin daughters of a Chinese restaurant keeper. These two seven-year-old girls were never seen otherwise than hand in hand, and night after night they were allowed to sit in one of the play rooms until their father or his housekeeper was free to come and fetch them. To show his gratitude the man quite often brought a brown paper bag which he thrust into the hands of any helper who happened to be about, usually muttering the single word: 'Fluit.' On opening the bag one usually found one or two dessert pears, a few apples or oranges, but on one occasion near Christmas-time a larger bag than usual was thrust into a helper's hand. It was tied about with string, and as he departed Ah Wong said: 'Chlistmas plesent.' To the recipient's horror the parcel started to move under her hands, and when it was hastily unwrapped a live chicken was disclosed. What does one do in the heart of the docks at eleven o'clock at night with a live chicken? One dare not kill it, even if one had the knowledge or the courage necessary, since one does not know whether the killing of a gift would be an offence. One dare not give it away, since the news would be certain to reach the donor by that effective grape-vine system which is part of the life of any



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE STOMACH

coloured community. Imagine then, boarding the last tram moving towards the west end of the town with a live chicken under your arm, and you will have some vision of the embarrassment which such a gift can bring with it. Apparently, however, the gift of a live bird is a supreme tribute among some Asiatics, and it is best on such occasions not to enquire too closely about where such a gift might have been obtained!

Even an embarrassment of this kind, however, can be turned to good account in causing one to reflect on the different laws and customs concerning food and the way it is prepared in other countries. It was the chat over a cup of tea and a rock cake (and by rock one means rock), resulting in a wistful remark about the lovely cakes it was possible to get in Russia in 1938, which led to the organisation of a most successful educational week-end on Russia. The fact that it is possible to make your own tea if you feel like it in a Japanese theatre caused another group to have a series of talks on the theatre in Japan, India, China and Russia.

The cup of tea at the end of a talk and before the meeting is thrown open for general discussion oils the wheels of thought for many people, and many a parent scrapes up courage from clutching a cup while he makes a contribution to a discussion—a courage he lacked before. The experience of education in the Services seems to point to the fact that here again the period for refreshment was a most valuable stimulator of thought and of ideas. We do not always remember how few are the opportunities for mothers to have a meal made for them—or how many fathers enjoy taking their wives and friends where they can 'have a bite of something' in addition to the entertainment or education.

There are more ways of killing a cat than drowning it in buttermilk, says the old proverb; there are certainly many ways of helping people to experience the joys of adventures in education if one is prepared to approach them through the stomach. Children and young people, parents and grandparents, clever and not so clever, we must all eat, and there are few people who really have a soul above food. The cup of tea and bun has been the great bridge across which the pioneers of social work and reforms have advanced to help their fellows in less

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE STOMACH

fortunate circumstances. Unless in the new world into which we are all advancing parent and child and all people at every economic level are given food for the mind as well as for the body, civilisation may yet destroy itself. There can be no better way of starting to provide food for the mind than that of linking it with food for the body, for of that, at least, we are not afraid.

## IV

# THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEET

---

Dancing; Personal Relationships; Health Education;  
the Open Air;  
Holiday Problems; Holidays and Education

---

*'I love to dance—but oh, my feet!'*—ADVERTISEMENT

*'Travel in the younger sort is a part of education, in the older a part of experience.'*—BACON

*'With change of place we change our ideas; nay, our opinions and feelings.'*—HAZLITT

Taking it by and large, more complaints are heard about people's feet than about any other part of their anatomy. Older people are always moaning that they are 'bad in their feet' or legs, and all sorts of people from octogenarians to Youth Leaders are continually complaining that 'young people nowadays do nothing but dance'. In youth clubs of all sorts and kinds dancing is one of the most popular activities. Even in the boys' club and pre-service unit dancing is apt to creep in from time to time, unwillingly sanctioned though it may be, on the ground that it is a certain money raiser.

It is not generally recognised, indeed, how much dancing forms a part of British life. It is not only the young people who like it; there are few towns or villages in which weekly dances for all and sundry do not take place, in 'the Institute', the Labour hall, the Liberal club or the Parish hall. The 'select dance, admission 6d., or the 'very select dance, admission 1s.', is one of the most regular features of the life of the community, and provincial papers always carry a large number of advertisements of weekly dances ranging in price of admission from 1s. 6d. to 5s. The 'old time dance' too has a very large clientèle in many provincial towns, as can be proved from a

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEET

study of these advertisements, and by the fact that one of the regular weekly features of the radio programmes is the old time dance, which must have quite a worth-while listening audience to continue.

It is a commonplace to be told by many a mother in County Durham, for instance, who has a rather shy and retiring daughter of about fifteen, that she is going to take her to the dance at the local hall 'for a couple of times, till she finds her feet'. But they know, and you know, and they know that you know that what they really mean is until she finds a few suitable partners and friends. Indeed, very often these local dances for the young people are run in conjunction with whist drives for the older ones, and in many places after the 'drive' is over they join in with the young people for the 'old time dances'.

It has been too lightly assumed that the popularity of dancing has waned considerably in this country since the tremendous increase in dancing after the 1914-1918 war. As a matter of fact, England has always been a great dancing country, since Elizabethan times at least. Dancing is one of the oldest folk-arts of England, and therefore it should not occasion such surprise to find so many English dancers in ballet, nor to find that English people have taken the opportunity to dance in any hall that has been available since the village green went out of fashion or existence.

Moreover there are few towns or villages that have not at least one or two dancing classes which cater for the young of all ages, from three upwards, and where, generation after generation, youth has sought instruction in every type of dancing from the Lancers to tap, and from eurhythmics to jive.

An activity which is so deeply rooted in the hearts of the people is obviously a grand jumping-off point for educational programmes—from hygiene and health to interest in the people and dancing of other countries; from personal relationships to the history of fashion; from dancing to walking; from walking to camping, and from camping to holidays in general. Just as the canteen gives its opportunities for making people more confident about behaviour in public, so does the dance

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEET

hall. As has been said elsewhere: 'The matter with most ball-room dancing is not that there is so much of it, but that it is so badly done.'

Of recent years that progressive body, the Central Council of Physical Recreation, has done an enormous amount to raise the standard of dancing in Youth groups. They have discovered from experience that new groups take extremely kindly to an occasional talk either before the actual dancing begins or during a pause in the instruction. Such a talk may include anything from the general etiquette of the ballroom, manners and behaviour, to suggestions as to what to wear and what not to wear, and even suggestions as to how to smell and how not to smell, questions ranging from an excessive use of brilliantine to a paucity of washing.

In this way many young people have been introduced to other and wider issues, for elementary rules of consideration lead to those not quite so elementary rules, which help one to achieve social poise and indeed social hygiene. As has been pointed out already, the whole question of manners worries young people very much indeed, and some of the best series of discussions on personal relationships have arisen from questions of ballroom manners. Give and take between the sexes, that very bothering business for the modern girl (and indeed the woman worker however much she earns) as to when she may or may not offer to pay, the very difficult question of 'dates', which, alas, is not covered by a fixed code in this country as it is in America, are all matters of importance if one is to live graciously. Arising out of questions of this kind, and as a result of three excellent talks on sex education, a seventeen-year-old boy once rang up asking for a talk on 'How to manage your love life', which formed the prelude to a series of six well attended and earnestly debated discussions on the whole question of personal relationships. 'How *do* you manage this business of growing up?' 'When *should* you be treated as grown up?' 'Why do we get browned off?'

After all, when everything has been said on this business of education, what really matters in life is one's ability to get on with other people. One may have all the letters of the



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEET

alphabet after one's name, in various combinations and permutations, but in the last resort what matters, except in a very few jobs, is whether you can work with other people. That hangover from the Spanish Inquisition, the modern interview, is a proof of this fact. For any given job, no matter how important, there are nearly always at least half a dozen people who, on paper, seem equally well qualified. Interviewing panels are seldom concerned therefore with the educational background of a candidate, and certainly are not consumed with curiosity about the colour of his hair or eyes; what they have to find out is with which candidate it seems most likely that they, or their officials, can bear to work. Most people can recall one or two of their old school acquaintances whose academic record was a shining one, but who seem to have failed to profit very much from it in after life. One wonders vaguely why 'old So-and-so' never seems to have risen to that position in life which his academic attainments would seem to warrant. As a rule, when one thinks about it carefully, it boils down to the fact that 'old So-and-so' has never mastered the art of personal relationships, as a friend, an employer or an employee.

But it is not only in this matter of job-seeking that personal relations matter, they are the very warp running through the weft of one's own attainments or accomplishments. The happiness of the excellent cook, the good manager, the gay dancer, is dependent in the last resort upon his or her ability, not in these skills, but in making others happy by their cooking, others comfortable by their good management, others happy when they dance with them.

Everyone knows this, but few people seem to have grasped the fact that each individual can do something about it, that a study of personal relationships, of manners, of what annoys and what does not annoy, is often a way of altering one's whole attitude towards life and of learning to cope with one's own temperamental weaknesses.

The way you manage your dance partner is instructive in itself. The more badly you dance, the more dependent you are on your feet; and as we have already said people's feet seem to give them a great deal of trouble. Many a successful ball-

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEET

room dancing class has found a very profitable and interesting starting-point for other educational adventures in discussing the whole question of the care of the feet. One can call to mind several of these classes which start with five-minute exercises for feet and ankles, and a number of other classes which have gone on from this to short courses on many and various branches of health and hygiene. A consideration of the feet inevitably leads to the question of washing, and it is almost impossible to consider the washing of feet without considering the whole question of washing the rest of the body and the hair.

The intake of women into the Services brought to light the rather devastating fact that, if one could judge from them, the percentage of dirty heads in this country was about one in four, with a slightly higher percentage in Scotland. Only those who had had a great deal of experience of working with young women in their early adulthood were not surprised by this. Indeed, many people who are otherwise scrupulously clean suffer from a curious reluctance to wash the hair. One is told that it will kill the natural oils, that the reason why men go bald is that they wash their heads too often, and that it is a great mistake to wash the hair during either menstruation or pregnancy. Although the permanent wave has been blamed for a great deal of this reluctance, hair washing has never been in popular favour. A recent correspondence in *The Times* revealed the fact that the older generation is shocked by the spectacle of young men unashamedly in the open street taking out combs to reduce their flowing locks to something like order. What should have shocked is the filthy state of most of the combs.

One of the most successful courses of hygiene that one could wish to organise started from a discussion on dirty combs, several of which had been discovered after the Saturday night dance. Elementary tips for washing hair, feet, and everything else is by no means a bad introduction to hygiene. One of the most irritating features of wartime was the promiscuous lending round of combs and shoes, particularly gym shoes, and yet few people seem to have connected this with the somewhat alarming spread of ringworm of the feet, commonly known as

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEET

athlete's foot, which was rife in the summer of 1940-41. One Youth Club had a short course of lectures on the whole question of disinfection and disinfestation, arising directly from the fact that the warden in charge of the club got a group to help him in disinfecting the gym shoes by the usual solution of formaldehyde method.

In all these problems, however, one must never forget that any hygiene teaching, to be effective, must be closely connected with what in fact people can do. It is all very well for the social worker, the doctor or nurse, or the hygiene high-hat, to expatiate on the value of the daily bath, but the fact remains that only one third of the houses of Great Britain in 1938 possessed a bathroom. Since then bombing, overcrowding and general shortages of accommodation have probably made the situation much worse. Consequently young people who are advised to take daily baths, or indeed groups of working house-wives who are given incidental advice about the advantages of daily baths, are inclined to let the whole of the rest of the talk pass over their heads since they think it must be divorced from any connection with life as they can live it. It is true that it is perfectly possible to keep spotlessly clean in the desert, provided one has access to a cup of water and a rag each day, and provided that one is blessed with the necessary perseverance, but would most of us do so? It is of little use to tell people that if they cannot get a daily bath they should wash the whole of their body in penny numbers, or 'have a good rub down', as it is usually called. If you shared a room with two or three other members of the family, and if you had to be at work at seven every morning, and if all the water had to be carried upstairs and therefore down again (the last stage is often forgotten), would *you* 'wash all over' before going to work—even in high summer, let alone in the depths of winter?

Moreover, let it be remembered that the other sharers of the room often vary in age, and that the more people who share a room the more furniture there is, and therefore the less space for manoeuvring about with kettles, jugs, bowls and so on. The extreme lack of privacy suffered by adolescents is something which few people seem to take into account. For

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEET

instance, in a survey made in 1938, in a girls' organisation of nation-wide extent, it was revealed that 50 per cent of the adolescent girl members had not even a drawer of their own, let alone a bed or a bedroom.

In conditions of overcrowding of this kind washing usually means washing at the kitchen sink, which means taking your turn, which in many families also means being fairly quick about it. Indeed in many a home the provision of a weekly bath is dependent on the careful organisation of the leisure-time activities of the whole family, particularly if there happens to be a lodger. As one girl very neatly put it: 'The closer you live together, the more respectable you have to be.'

There are few mothers of adolescent girls who would think it particularly 'respectable' quite apart from the inconvenience to the preparing of breakfast, if they wished to strip each morning at the kitchen sink; and the sink is not always in even such a private place as the kitchen. In no matter of advice is it truer than in this matter of personal hygiene, to say that it is not so much what you *can* do, as what you can *bring* yourself to do.

Many of those more happily situated with regard to bathrooms have found themselves lowering the flag of the daily bath when faced with the type of camp where the cup of water and a rag method is about all that is possible, and where privacy is a chancy thing. One young woman wrote from a mixed camp: 'It is now 6.30 p.m. I have done lots of things, prepared sausages for breakfast, got supper ready, soaked peas, stewed gooseberries, and washed again. Lunch was very good today, Joshki and Atkin of all people complimented me on the sweet, a great tribute and relief! We also had enough potatoes—even enough for me to save some for a salad tonight. I have only just had my afternoon clean-up, however—a bath in penny numbers and at great nervous expense in spite of a chair jammed against the dining-room hut door. I was called to stop a fight in the middle of it, and you know how shocked they would have been if I had rushed out improperly clad to stop their fight (however improper I might have considered that fight).'

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEET

There is a further fallacy about this whole business of cleanliness, and that is the stupid phrase much in use among the self-righteous, 'Soap and water is cheap enough'. Soap and water are definitely not cheap—especially hot water, and especially in the matter of time, energy and planning which the use of soap and water so frequently entails. The whole business of cleaning, the cleaning of clothes particularly, is quite a considerable expense, and often a sheer impossibility for people who have not the sort of wardrobe that can allow of one set of clothes being almost constantly at the cleaner's. Hence discussions on cleanliness must be related to housing conditions and the financial conditions of the group with which one is dealing, and the whole matter has to be done very lightly, otherwise people are quite likely to take offence or else to think that it is all 'just a lot of talk'.

One of the most successful series of talks on personal and social hygiene was arranged under a series of rather flippant titles. 'The romance of the flea, the bug and the louse' was really a talk on verminous heads and how to deal with them. but intriguing facts about how soon these insects become grandmothers and intriguing sights under the microscope soon got people happy enough to ask for that advice, which it is nearly always a mistake to give uninvited. 'If you happen to know somebody who has things on their head, what would you tell them to do?' was the obvious question to come from the audience, and the lecturer had worked to get the request—a much more difficult but far more tactful thing than handing out the information unasked. For twenty minutes thereafter, old-fashioned and new-fashioned recipes were exchanged between lecturer and audience, always preserving the dignity of people who 'might know' 'someone' who would require such advice. 'I know a fellow who' is the usual prelude to a personal problem, as the psychologist well knows.

This talk was followed by one on 'Rats, drains, the dustbin and the baby', a glorious and intriguing combination, which brought in the fascinating story of one of the least advertised of modern victories, the almost complete conquest in the battle against summer diarrhoea, which even as late as 1904 was responsible for a death rate of 57 per cent of babies under



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEET

twelve months old, and which has now been reduced to an almost negligible figure. The tale of the winning of such a battle led inevitably to a request from one half of the group for talks on other battles won by the health and medical services, and from another part of the group for a series called 'Dashing talks on Nature' which was followed by another called 'Red line gymnastics'.

This brings one to the problem of exercises. Physical training instructors share at least one attribute with the clergy, in that the majority of both are preaching almost solely to the converted. Most of the people who indulge in games, physical training and such activities after they leave school are those who like them. Others feel about physical training as many people feel about art. They know they *ought* to like it, they know they *ought* to do something about it, but in actual fact they don't. The physical training and games expert, however, is in a rather happier position than the arts specialist, since most people in this country feel that they *ought* to apologise if they don't like games or don't take exercise, while it is rather an occasion for boasting if you don't like music or you cannot 'see anything in pictures', or you are 'a regular fool at maths. or Latin'.

It is, however, possible to interest people in games and exercises through that constant worry of most of us, 'How do I look?' or that constant worry of a few of us 'How can I keep well?' An approach, which is an answer to these two questions, can often be the introduction to a great deal of health education, provided that one remembers that after leaving school people's interest in the subject will be adult and concerned for the most part with social skills; which is why dancing, and therefore the approach through the feet, is so full of possibilities.

We do not always remember how much people's personal appearance worries them, possibly because we have all learned to shelter behind rather shamefaced little jokes about it. The fact is, that Maurice at seventeen is terribly bothered about his muscles, or rather the lack of them, and Percy finds his pimples a tragedy. Winnie, if she doesn't long for a wasp waist, at least longs for a slim hip line. Mum would die rather than

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEET

confess it, but she is worried about her middle-aged spread or bicycle tyre, and Dad does not really view with enormous delight his budding corporation. (One of the main reasons for the success of so many bowling clubs is the secret that has been whispered abroad that it is good for one's stomach muscles.) Some of the most successful afternoon 'Keep fit' classes for mothers have been sold under the guise of 'Health and Beauty'. And a great deal of the success of the Health and Beauty movement itself is probably due to the fact that the very title fills people with hope. A group of girls in a club who were totally unmoved by 'Keep fit' worked very hard over lists of exercises most kindly supplied by Elizabeth Arden, exercises which were the same in content as those which they had hitherto rejected with contumely. Boys want desperately to look both manly and attractive, and a great deal of the agony of shyness which they go through is due to their distaste for their personal appearance. Anything that will improve their appearance is therefore felt to be useful; if it will improve their health at the same time it is obviously a bargain, and human nature finds a bargain almost irresistible.

Moreover, a fairly large minority of people 'enjoy' bad health. Indeed, as the Radio Doctor is fond of asserting, most people think of health in a negative fashion as being not ill enough to be under the doctor, and numberless people regard back-ache, flat feet, indigestion, toothache, and headaches as the normal minor griefs the flesh is heir to.

The very number of young people who carry aspirins about with them is somewhat disturbing. In one week of visits to clubs and youth organisations it was possible to collect the following number of aspirins by mentioning a headache at suitable moments. In a youth centre with about 120 people present, and with a stay of about an hour and a half, 60 aspirins were offered in ones and twos. The next night, in a pre-service unit, 30 people present, during a stay of three quarters of an hour, 12 aspirins were collected, mostly at the canteen. In a Church fellowship, with three quarters of an hour's stay, about 60 people present, 25 aspirins were obtained. In an Evening Institute, by visiting 6 different classes and the last

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEET

half hour of dancing for the whole centre, about 200 people present, a total bag of 75 aspirins was made.

The point is not that the aspirins were provided in such quantities, but that they were collected in ones and twos from little groups; nearly all of them obviously made a practice of carrying them about with them. High as one's opinion of the generosity and decency of the adolescent may be, it is difficult to believe that most of these young people were carrying aspirins about solely in order to offer them to the old and decrepit. It must mean, therefore, that they themselves suffer from a variety of minor disabilities which they hope to alleviate by an aspirin or so occasionally, and it is only fair to mention that even among groups of boys there was seldom no-one who had aspirins on him. It would be wrong to deduce from this that there is a dangerous and growing aspirin habit among young adults, but here we seem to have an indication of the general lack of positive health.

Moreover, the adolescent is often worried by many of the physical manifestations of his growing up, and he is hardly helped by the advertisements for various patent medicines. By the time he has been told how to ease his headache, his indigestion and his flat feet, only one half of his miseries are dealt with, since there are all the remaining advertisements of the 'best friend would not tell her' variety, the more honest perspiration, bad breath and body odour advertisements, not to mention all you need to know about constipation and catarrh; and the war years have added to these, dark suggestions about V.D. We all know that the reading of a medical dictionary can convince even the most well-balanced that they have at least one or two of the more objectionable diseases. It is probably equally true to say that the perusal of the advertisements in any magazine is enough to shake the confidence of most of us.

There must be many young people like the boy who confessed to his club leader that he never had the courage to ask a girl to dance because he was not sure whether he suffered from halitosis since he knew his father did, and so he did not like to ask at home, and did not know where else to ask. The problems of perspiration, bad breath and constipation are a

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEET

very real burden. Indeed one of the most truly Christian parsons, who has charge of a difficult parish comprising many widely different economic levels and who is outstanding for the numbers of young people he draws into his Church, as well as into his Youth Fellowship, always maintains that one of the most important questions to ask young people at confirmation is whether they suffer from constipation, since its effect on one's health is reflected in one's general good temper and therefore one's ability to lead a happy, Christian life.

The effect of so many of these advertisements on young people, if they do not have some sane health education to fall back on, will only be surpassed by the fear of the adolescent, that he has 'picked up something'. One cannot but welcome the fact that some of the mumbo-jumbo surrounding V.D. has been broken down during the war years, but a great deal of reference to this and to other complaints when dealt with in an advertisement is still necessarily of a veiled nature, and thus has its definite drawbacks.

The amount of superstition which has regained currency as the result of the V.D. propaganda may have repercussions for some little time. For instance, in the 'To Start You Talking' radio series, in both 'Learning about Sex' and in 'All out for a good time', the discussion revealed the fact that many young people were extremely bothered about matters of hygiene, which, unless they are solved, will make life for some of them extremely uncomfortable. In a club which was holding a series of talks on personal relationships, two young women arrived on one Friday night rather late. They came to the instructor afterwards in the canteen to apologise for this fact. 'You see', said one of them, 'I had gone to the Post Office to draw my allowance (she was a young married woman with her husband in the Services) 'and my friend came with me. But when I got there I found I did not have my pen, so we had to go all the way home again.' In an effort to turn the thing into a joke the speaker said: 'Good gracious! Have the Post Office pens got so bad that you can't even write with them nowadays?' and was treated to a gale of pop-eyed horror: 'Ooh, you *couldn't* use one of those. Post Office pens might

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEET

give you V.D., specially if you happened to be forgetful, like, and happened to chew it.'

The problems of life will surely become unduly burdensome if you cannot use an unknown pen, a cracked cup, a strange lavatory, or the paper therein, without a momentary feeling that you may be letting yourself in for you know not what. It is not so much physical training, or exercise, or even hygiene in its narrower sense that these young people need, as social biology; for health has to be treated in the round, not in watertight compartments, if one is to avoid making people self-conscious or self-righteous about it on the one hand, so that they adopt a 'more holy than thou' attitude, and avoid making them contemptuous of it on the other, simply because it seems to bear so little reference to their own particular problems.

Another useful introduction to health education is through the question of how much sleep you get if you go to too many dances. The temptation to burn the candle at both ends is very strong in adolescence, particularly when young people have just started to work. They are employed for longer hours than they were at school, and yet they feel, as emancipated young men and women, that they should have longer, and certainly later, leisure hours. The result is that they are apt to do too much, or else to find that the adults' efforts to stop them doing too much result in a wearing amount of friction.

A more useful, because it is a less moralising, way of interesting young people in sleep is a consideration of the question of dreams. There are few working girls, or indeed few of their mothers, who have not at one time or another pored over a 'dream book'. Even if they will not confess to possessing such a book themselves, 'my friend' nearly always has one, and it is perfectly possible by starting with the 'dream book' to consider the whole problem of dreams and their relation to indigestion, and sleep, and Freud, with a line on 'what the stars foretold' thrown in.

Sleep and rest are obviously intimately associated with fresh air, and with housing problems. Here again, by way of the most exciting sidelines, one can find oneself building



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEET

up from a foundation of the common fairy tales concerning health, a history of the growth of knowledge concerning health matters. The very subject of blood and bleeding can lead from the cobweb to the tourniquet, the question of cutting the nails and hair may well open the way to some very interesting discussions about popular superstitions concerning the effect of the sun on growth, and the effect of the moon on lunacy. The old tag about 'Better the man had never been born, that hath his nails on the Sabbath shorn' is still in popular circulation, and the whole question of nervous disturbances and their relation to the moon can take one from a consideration of the word lunatic, to the fascinating study of the treatment of mental disturbance from Biblical times to Bedlam, and from Bedlam to the present time when increasing numbers of people are attending mental institutions voluntarily for treatment.

The common superstitions with regard to menstruation, and pregnancy, are another very useful starting-point for the study of various health and housing questions, and so are common infections and their treatment through the ages, from measles to colds and from colds to diphtheria. One series of classes on Public Health was started from a casual remark that in certain clinics the doctors and nurses have deliberately speeded up the number of diphtheria immunisations that they can do in an hour so that neither mothers nor children shall have long enough to wait to get frightened about it. Even if they are at the end of a queue, if it is rapidly moving forward they have the reassurance that 'if that's all the time it takes it can't be so bad'. This question of ordinary protective measures, immunisation and the like, can also form another approach to the already mentioned romantic story of those diseases that have almost disappeared, such as summer diarrhoea, cholera, and small pox, which are also interesting as a revelation of the connection between housing, sanitation and health.

During the war years, owing to the number of civilian casualties, quite a number of people became interested in the hospital services for the first time. Here again, in the history of the development of hospitals, there is much else

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEET

that is exciting besides the life of Florence Nightingale with which most people seem to begin and end. One course on hospitals, rehabilitation, children's hospitals, field and base hospitals, started from a group which had seen the film of the life of Madame Curie, and it is almost impossible to go very far along these lines without becoming interested in disinfectants, antiseptics and anaesthetics. Few people need to know much about anaesthetics, but many doctors would probably be surprised if they realised that a great part of the layman's fear of 'the knife' is due to the fact that large numbers of people are never really quite convinced that the anaesthetic always 'takes'.

These are but a few of the ways in which health, housing, population and indeed racial problems can be studied among young groups and among adults. We all know that it is most useful if everyone can be persuaded to take a class in First Aid, but the fact is that everybody cannot be persuaded to do so. Approach along any of these lines does bring a certain number of recruits to First Aid classes, but it is no less helpful for those who have already an interest in such classes but who want to know a little more of the broader scheme into which First Aid fits. There is perhaps much to be said for keeping instruction in First Aid within fairly narrow limits. One has seen so many groups of amateurs giving glib answers (and indeed demonstrations of how they would deal with a fractured patella for instance), as to make one nervous about too much First Aid. It is not for nothing that in the height of the air raids many of us pinned a notice to our underwear which said: 'On no account am I to be first aided. I'd rather die of what I've got.' Such organisations as the Red Cross and St. John's Ambulance do marvellous work both in instruction and in the practice of First Aid, and we would perhaps be wise to insist that any people really interested should join their classes, where proper training is given by experienced people who know too much to allow their members to be other than conscientious and scrupulously careful.

The approach through the feet can lead one in an entirely different direction. One can begin with generalisations, which

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEET

are about as true as most generalisations. For instance—if you can dance you can walk, if you can dance you can cycle, if you can dance you can swim. Thus, out of the dancing class, rambling societies, cycling clubs and swimming clubs can grow. In all these activities, whether one is dealing with an adult group or not, the approach to everyone after they leave school must be the adult approach. Many very sensible people never walk or cycle, because they find that they can be bored without the expenditure of so much effort. Many a hiking and cycling club has been ruined because neither the Leader nor anyone else had the slightest idea of what you *do* on a walk. It is all very well to say that you just put one foot before the other and admire the birds and trees and flowers and the scenery, but an eye for birds, trees, flowers and scenery has to be cultivated.

Scenery was only discovered in the eighteenth century, and lots of people who would never lay claim to the mental stature of Dr. Johnson would be left just as cold as he was (in every sense of the word) by a journey to the Hebrides. Quite half the reason why people take a gramophone on the river or a piano accordion to the mountain top, is that they do not know what to do with their eyes. The more beautiful the scenery and the view, the more uncomfortable they feel, and the more grateful they are therefore for the nice cosy dance music that soothes their half-realised fears. Except for those for whom physical fitness is a cult, or for those in whom the seeing eye is well developed, the walk or the cycle ride has to be planned very carefully in the early stages. One cannot get excited about birds if all birds seem alike to one, and the same is true of trees or flowers, and therefore a certain amount of preparation is necessary, before people can get worked up about 'this-acca' and 'that-ophylla'. Perhaps the easiest way of starting is not through 'nature' but by making the focal point of one's walk or cycle ride a visit to an interesting church or village, or place where some great man was born, or once lived, or died. Incidentally, every group that cycles or rambles should be led by someone who has a repertoire of encouraging games which can be played on the way home, when every prospect fails to please because one is too

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEET

tired. The rambling society, however, can be a very useful starting-off ground for a study of architecture and for the person who never before knew he could sketch, and for a study of town and country life, not to mention town and country manners, dress and behaviour. Some most interesting holidays have had as their basis the following of an old Roman road, or sailing down some of our canals. The very towns through which one passes often yield a line which can be profitably followed up. For instance a group who were proceeding to the New Forest passed through the town of Shaftesbury, and were extremely intrigued to find that its curious geographical situation is only paralleled in one other town in Europe—in Italy. This fact led them to try to find out as much as possible about the Italian counterpart, and took them into the highways and byways of a great deal of Italian life and literature.

A great deal can be done in the way of exchange visits between town and country. A great deal is indeed already being done by various youth organisations to arrange that young people from the town shall be given hospitality in the country during the summer months, and that young people from the country shall be given hospitality in the town during the winter. We are always being told that the countryman and the townsman do not understand one another, and one wonders whether a great deal of this lack of understanding (if it really exists in such acute form as is suggested) could not also be tackled by adult groups, possibly through inter-hospitality and holiday schemes with such bodies as Tenants' Associations, Women's Institutes and Townswomen's Guilds.

It is very easy to make fun of the motley army of townspeople who pour into the country, whether to help with the harvest or to engage in shooting and fishing. A townsman turned countryman is fair game for every sort of humorist, but as Mr. Bracy, the moving spirit behind the Youth Service Volunteers, reminded people on one occasion, although the city farm worker is not as polished a performer as the professional, he too is at least trying to get to know the countryside, and 'what he knows he loves'.

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEET

The cycling club can lead to discussions on the whole question of insurance, from accident to life, and from life to social insurance. I was privileged to be present at the first meeting of the cycling club at the 'Jack and Jill' club at Bradford. There were about twenty young people present, all more or less strangers to one another, and the chair was taken very ably by a young woman of about eighteen. During the course of that one meeting the secretary was instructed to obtain further particulars about insurance; a lengthy discussion on the merits and demerits of hire purchase was launched, which need not have ended with the hire purchase of cycles, and probably didn't since the leader of the club had plenty of imagination and a gift for improvisation; and as I left the meeting reluctantly they were just embarking on the whole ethics of the question of the escort. Is it right or proper in a properly organised cycling club to rely on your friend falling out with you if something goes wrong with your machine, or should one draw up a rota of those who are on 'escort duty' for each meeting? It is an important and tricky point. Your friend, be he never so friendly, may not have the repair material or any more knowledge of how to make the repairs, or of the route planned, than you have. There seemed to be a general feeling that the blind should not be left to lead the blind in this case, and that a truly friendly society could only exist where everybody took turns in helping everyone else, which is, of course, the essence of citizenship. Yet another point discussed in this meeting was the etiquette of cycling with or without trouserclips, and with too short short pants. When should convenience be sacrificed to good manners? Another excellent leading question for a series of talks.

There is a number of other activities which can arise from dancing. Boating is much neglected in this country with its many waterways. It is sad that many of our City Fathers do not spend as much time and money in stocking the lakes in the parks with boats as they do in stocking the flower beds with plants. 'There is *nothing*—absolutely nothing—half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats.' Yet even the general knowledge of many



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEET

people concerning the various types of craft is lamentable. When one Local Council was informed that it might be possible to buy for the park lake twenty gondolas (which for some extraordinary and highly romantic reason were going cheap) the motion was lost because one of the worthy councillors proposed that it would be more economical to buy two and let them breed. He thought that they were some kind of fancy duck, and there was no-one to contradict him but the proposer of the motion, who was asked to investigate further, by which time, of course, the opportunity was lost.

Rock climbing is yet another activity which has its appeal for those who like to develop their social skills. Skating, particularly roller skating, is yet another. One of the main reasons for the popularity of dancing among working boys and girls is that it is one of the few social skills at their command. They want to be graceful, they want to be skilful, and most games have to be considered in that light. The well-to-do need not dance all the time. They have their fencing, their squash, their badminton, their tennis, their swimming, their riding, but boys and girls who find all these activities too expensive have perforce to stick to dancing, and therefore they quite rightly make the most of it.

It is idle to suppose that people are going to embark on an activity which, because they have not had lessons in their youth, shows them at a disadvantage. For that reason, if for no other, it is probably a pity that croquet has fallen out of favour, since it is one of the few games that is more fun if you lose than if you win, and together with chess and patience belongs to that kindly, comfortable group of games which is none the worse for two or three recognised cheats per game!

From using the feet to indulge in outdoor activities, it is but a small step to the matter of camping week-ends and holidays. In a recent enquiry conducted among 6,000 adolescent girls between fourteen and twenty, camping was shown to be by far the most popular activity, and the one for which

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEET

the demand for increased amenities was greatest.<sup>1</sup> If it is one of the most popular activities among girls, how much more so is it among boys. Yet camping is one of those things which is often almost criminally badly done. The Guides and Scouts are the best campers in the world, but for them camping is of itself both an art and a science, and many of the lesser brethren find themselves worn out by the high standard which they demand. But there is a crying need for something between this camping *in excelsis* and camping in squalor. It is interesting to note in this respect too that the Central Council for Physical Recreation is now seriously considering the whole question of camping and camping standards among ordinary people, from youth groups to factory workers, and has embarked on some extremely well thought-out courses for leaders.

There was a time when camping meant having a tent, taking it somewhere, pitching it, sleeping in it, eating in it, and hoping it would not rain. But tents are expensive, they are difficult to store in winter, and in any case they should not be used for sleeping in, in this country of rheumatic complaints, unless people have been brought up to it, or are of the hardy breed that does not know the difference between ventilation and sleeping in the teeth of a screaming gale.

Because tents are so difficult, and because our English weather is so fitful, there has been an increasing tendency to use the semi-permanent type of camp. Many Local Authorities led the way in this respect by erecting large wooden hutments, often in very beautiful surroundings, which might be used as school camps. Two notable examples are those of the Oxford Education Authority and the Scottish Education Department. The latter has a beautiful camp at Aberfoyle in the heart of the Trossachs, which in general lay-out and amenities is not unlike the type of school children's camp to be found in many parts of Russia. Probably one of the most profitable things that has come out of the war is the Bill to turn over to the Ministry of Education all those hutments which the Ministry of Health constructed in the war years to deal with the evacuees who could not be housed

<sup>1</sup>*The Interests of the Adolescent Girl*. Ed. J. Macalister Brew, for Nat. Assoc. of Girls' Clubs and Mixed Clubs.

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEET

in any other way. All these will make an excellent contribution towards camping amenities for children and young people, but even these are probably not enough.

Nearly every voluntary organisation tries to maintain at least one or two holiday houses in various parts of the country, while some small groups of individual people have often taken over a house or a series of huts or a seaside village school during the summer months. In one sense this is all to the good, but in another sense it has its drawbacks. It has meant that a large number of people have developed the notion that anything which is sufficiently far away from anywhere and which has a roof, even though it may leak in places, will do for a holiday camp, and that young people ought to be only too glad to come to spend their one week's holiday in quarters which are not even furnished with the bare necessities of life (though the surroundings may be beautiful in the extreme). It is all very well to talk about the joys of roughing it, but if you rough it at home, if you are living in overcrowded houses with no privacy whatsoever, it is not much of a change to spend your one holiday of the year doing the same thing.

Moreover, more fortunate young people who have very definite standards of respectability and privacy in their own homes are often shocked to the core to find that the holiday house they heard praised so highly has no standards of sanitation, cleanliness or furnishings. Many organisers of holidays are disappointed or indignant, according to their nature, by the number of young people who return home at the end of the second day because they are 'homesick'. It is fairly safe to assume that in at least a proportion of these cases the young people are not homesick in the sense of being unable to exist without a sight of Dad or Mum, but that they are unable to adjust themselves to a standard of living which they know would horrify Dad and Mum. Much of this vaunted 'roughing it' and 'being all girls' or 'all boys together' is sheer laziness and dishonesty. No matter what the background of people, young or old, it is not honest to spend a vast proportion of one's time during the winter months discussing housing and hygiene or getting people used to the

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEET

idea that it is not a bad thing to wash occasionally, and then to take them away to a place where it is almost impossible to put these things into practice, and where, indeed, they are expected to *like* not doing so. It is dishonest to talk to people about diet and balanced meals, and the rest of it, and then to take them away to a series of meals which are cooked in conditions of unutterable uncleanness, and then thrown at them rather than served.

Moreover, except for those who are accustomed to being waited on hand and foot, and who do not do very hard physical work during the rest of the year, one's holiday time is not the time to spend receiving instruction in cooking and cleaning. That great and oldest of the youth organisations, the Boy's Brigade, has always recognised this, and one of the main principles of their camps is that they always engage a fully paid and fully qualified cook to take charge of the meals, which frees the officers for their real business, the business of carrying on the leadership of the camp.

It should be a labouring of the obvious to say that the business of a leader is to lead, but too many camps and holiday homes are organised with insufficient help. If an unfortunate leader has to be responsible for the catering, cooking and cleaning, as well as the hundred and one emergencies which arise in even the best ordered scheme, by the third day he will be too harassed and too tired to cope with the real job of making the holiday a happy one for everyone concerned, and certainly too exhausted to make it the educational experience that living together in a group of people can be. Were I dictator, no-one would be allowed to take a group of young people on a so-called holiday without at least one adult helper whose sole responsibility would be the cooking, and no-one would be allowed to call a squalid hut or country cottage, with bare floors, and mattresses that are best not inquired into, a 'holiday home'; particularly if the full extent of the amenities amounts to a collection of oddments of crockery, bare tables and a common room reminiscent of a second-hand shop, containing nothing to sit on but benches, and perhaps one arm-chair with three legs, or a settee which leaves a trail of dry rot from its legs and flock from its interior



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEET

every time it is moved. This is not an exaggeration, nor is it an isolated experience.

It is not easy, of course, to secure definite standards of comfort, it raises the cost of the holiday, but Mary and Jack Aspidistra would gladly pay a little extra for a certain amount of comfort, and Mary and Jack Toughguy will never have their standards raised if they are expected to like living in squalor on a holiday.

Indeed, much of the so-called problem of behaviour on residential week-ends is a direct result of the poor standard of equipment in camps and holiday homes. Behaviour is, after all, a question of standards, and the great difficulty of much educational and welfare work is that leaders and teachers have certain standards and are apt to assume that those they are leading and teaching have no standards at all. The fact is that they often have the same standards, and even where their standards are different, the code may be more rigid and more complex than that of the leader.

In exactly the same way, it is untrue to say that people nowadays have no standards of honesty. Among young people generally there is an extremely rigid code concerning the taking of property that does not belong to them, but in the old days *all* such taking was regarded as stealing. Now one may scrounge, win, fiddle, find, get over the wall or steal, and there is a fine distinction between all these. No-one is more shocked than he who is accused of stealing when he may not even have scrounged, he may only have fiddled, or possibly won!<sup>1</sup>

Just as there are variations in standards concerning this matter, so there are variations in standards concerning those three great problems of residential life: sleeping, washing, and eating. It is essential that one should understand and respect other people's standards concerning these things before trying to suggest to them that they should replace their standards by different ones.

One of the great trials of residential behaviour is the anxiety which seems to attack many leaders because no

<sup>1</sup>See broadcast script, 'Scrounging and Stealing', in *To Start You Talking*, Pilot Press.



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEET

matter how many beautiful single beds, bunks, mattresses or palliasses one provides, no matter how well thought out the spacing is, no matter how carefully young people are shown how to make up their own beds so that they are well tucked in and warm, when they actually go to bed they abandon all one's instructions, pull the beds or mattresses together, share the bedding and sleep in groups of two or three. The fact is that they like to sleep together, partly because they have to do so at home, and partly because in a strange place and among strange people they feel lonely (and at no time of life is loneliness more acute than at adolescence).

It is a great adventure for many young people when they first go away from home to sleep. Even if they have been away for holidays before it is usually either with the whole family or to stay with other relations. Too many of us have been apt to assume, because we embarked on boarding school life at six or ten, that everybody else has done the same. One of the most touching stories about air raids was told by the Matron of a London hospital in one of the 'Week's Good Cause' broadcasts, when she said that during air raids they always moved the beds of patients who could not be taken down to shelter as near one another as possible, as it gave them confidence and made them feel happier. What hospitals can concede, with all their high standards of cleanliness, hygiene and health, can surely be allowed by the Youth Leader who is taking young people away for what after all is supposed to be fun.

If this question of friendliness is not the root cause, if the young people have been away on several occasions and are not shy or inclined to be homesick after dark, the only thing one can do is to point out that it is much more restful to sleep on one's own, and make sure that all of them are warmer than you think you would need to be. In all these things it is much more important that people shall be happy in the first place, and one should go very slowly in imposing other standards upon them. After all, quite a number of them are probably accustomed to sleeping two or three in a bed at home. Any suggestion, therefore, of shocked surprise or sarcastic comment falls upon ears which find such comment

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEET

either funny or offensive. We all know that sleeping together is not as healthy as sleeping on their separate bunks or on their separate mattresses, but it is by no means a sign of any sort or kind of moral degeneracy. We all know that such habits of sleeping together encourage what are known as bad practices, but most people qualified to judge in this matter would agree that, although self-masturbation is fairly common, mutual masturbation is fairly rare, and in any case one cannot get up to very much in a tent or a dormitory filled with numbers of other people.

While one is on this subject of sleeping, there is also another matter which seems to worry people a great deal, the whole question of whether one should or should not have group leaders sleeping with the young people. When one asks why an issue should be made of this, few people seem to have very much to say, and in this as in so many other things it is so easy to do the right thing from the wrong motive. There seems no reason why older people should not have some privacy, and there seems no reason why they should inflict themselves on the young people, especially as such infliction is bound to savour to a certain extent of policing. On the whole young people are very much better left to themselves, and no-one will get very much sleep the first night or so in a camp no matter how the sleeping arrangements are conducted.

Another reason why young holiday-makers like sleeping together is the simple one of warmth. There is no greater fallacy than that which asserts that the young do not feel the cold. In adolescence particularly, the circulatory system of young people is not always all it might be, and as has been said in another connection one has to take into consideration the temperature in which they are accustomed to work. If they draw their beds together or share a bunk, they have more blankets to spread over them, and they are therefore warmer. In too many cases where people become high-minded about young people sleeping together one finds that they themselves have secured at least two extra blankets plus their own personal eiderdown flea-bag. Moreover, the very quality of the woollen vests and pyjamas which the leaders and organisers

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEET

possess is often far more warmth-giving than those of the young people. I have seldom been more embarrassed than on an occasion when a lusty he-woman went through the dormitories of a crowd of young people spending their first night away from home. She insisted on their washing to the waist in beautiful water from the running brook, removing their vests, and sleeping in their separate bunks, and then she returned to her tent, made a cup of hot cocoa, filled a hot-water bottle, and went to bed wearing everything except the kitchen stove. This is an extreme example, but how many leaders and organisers of camps can put their hands on their hearts and say that they have never issued three blankets to the campers and gone to bed themselves with six?

The matter of washing is again a question of standards, standards not only of cleanliness but of modesty and respectability. As was pointed out earlier, there are hundreds of people in this country who can only indulge in a daily bath with the greatest difficulty, and there are also thousands of young and old who hate the very idea of stripping and washing in front of other people. Moreover, it is by no means a fair deduction that because young people do not strip and wash in the communal washing places provided in camps and hostels they necessarily do not strip and wash in their own homes. It is just as likely to be due to the fact that they do not like to do so in public. The provision of showers in schools and the splendid way in which physical training instructors are encouraging young people to get out of their clothes is making a difference gradually, and will doubtless make more headway when the provision of properly equipped gymnasia, playing fields and showers is universal. Nevertheless, as far as the young adult is concerned, we must realise that shower baths at school are one thing, whereas a row of basins with no privacy at all in a camp is quite another. Furthermore, at the onset of puberty, many young people who were quite happy about this sort of thing before, become very shy, a perfectly natural thing, and it is very cruel to undermine this reserve too brutally.

One is told that if the Leader sets an example of washing to the waist and the rest of it the young people will follow suit.

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEET

In actual practice this does not always work, and one calls to mind a beautiful example of this, where girls returned home from camp on the second day because, as they put it, they found that the Leader was 'all very well in the club' but was 'a very vulgar woman who tried to make them bathe with nothing on and washed in front of everybody'. It is quite possible that a number of the others who came away for unexplained reasons may have been shocked in the same way; which brings one back to the question of standards, and the fact that what is respectable at one economic level is not necessarily respectable at another. Finally, this diffidence about washing in public is sometimes due to a certain shyness about either the quality, or general condition of one's underclothes, and this is true of boys as well as girls.

Another of the great problems of residential holidays is the problem of food. We all know that people should adore the good wholesome salad, and should always begin their breakfast with porridge. We all know how heartbreaking it is to prepare a good wholesome evening meal and then find that the whole camp has gone down to the fish and chip shop. But the Persians have a proverb which says 'It is the mark of the peasant to be suspicious of strange food'; and it is certainly the mark of people who have not been much away from home to be suspicious of any meal which is not exactly 'what mother makes'. Quite a lot of the distaste for food away from home is due to this fundamental dislike of difference. If they are in the least diffident or homesick it is quite likely that the food which is provided will not agree with them, and in this case one has to go very gently indeed. It is, of course, both maddening and fairly generally true, that the worst fed at home, according to our standards, are very often the ones who make the most fuss about food when away from home. Even this is partly a result of fear of the unaccustomed and partly a defence mechanism which many people set up at what they feel to be an implied criticism of their own home and its standards. Social workers in particular are too apt to imagine that love, affection and loyalty are only found among those who come from good homes. Yet one of the most touching things in the world is the loyalty and affection which

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEET

young people have for standards which some of us do not even recognise as standards at all.

Another problem which is always being discussed with regard to residential week-ends and camps is the question of relationships with the other sex, especially as the number of mixed holidays and camps has increased during recent years. Actually the problem usually seems to be more acute in a single sex camp, where either the boys or the girls, whichever it may happen to be, naturally seek the company of the other sex in the village or town; and during war-time the neighbouring camps provided a never-ending attraction. Here again, leaders often cause themselves a great deal of unnecessary anxiety. One must always remember that a great deal of this walking about and singing and laughing is born of of desire to show off to 'the natives' and an equally strong desire to shock the Leader, and the more one looks as though one is being careful and likely to be shocked, the more it is likely to occur. It seems idle to bother unnecessarily about things that are on the whole just fun, but if one has any real grounds for thinking that there is trouble of any sort the only thing to do is to send the culprits away as soon as possible. Being tolerant and trying to make people happy does not mean tolerating behaviour which is definitely harmful, but as a rule if people waited until something definitely harmful occurred they would have to wait a very long time.

Gambling, one is told, is another and more serious problem, but on this matter, which raises so many emotional conflicts in people, there is nothing one can helpfully say. All leaders have to deal with it as they think best, if and when they discover it. Nevertheless, one cannot help pointing out that it is more salutary to prove how silly it is than to ban it altogether, and possibly in that way to drive it underground.

The other great problem of residential week-ends seems to be the difficulty of sharing jobs. We all suffer from a temptation to make things easy, and making things easy in communal life so often means doing all the jobs oneself. This inevitably means getting gradually more and more tired, and therefore more and more irritable as the days pass by, or else relying



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEET

on a few 'willing horses' to help one out. Everyone knows the theory of making a rota for various jobs, but it is having the courage to stick to it that matters. One's best plans are often thwarted by the people who willingly help whether they are on the rota or not. It is fatally easy to go on accepting this help without realising what it is doing to the group. Unfortunately it is not always the 'nicest' boy or girl, or those with the best influence, who cling around being either officiously or humbly helpful. Alas, in this matter of personal relationships one's apparent successes are quite often one's greatest failures, and there is nothing healthy young people, who by their nature are inclined to be 'agin' authority, dislike more than the type of leadership which is carried out by the aid of one or two willing slaves. Often enough it is the people who complain most that cliques form in camps and holiday groups who are most inclined to have this little group of hangers-on themselves. Young people are quick to see how fatuous it is that a leader shall demand that everyone else mixes, but so arrange things that he or she shall be surrounded by the same band of admirers the whole time. Again, in this matter of breaking up cliques, it is much easier not to, but nobody but a fool engages in a holiday or a week-end of communal living really thinking that they can do so easily. We all know of the young people who go through a phase of hero worship for the leader. We all know too, alas, the leader who curries favour with the group, but anyone who has collected either adults or young people of this kind on holiday must cope with the situation without delay, as soon as it rears its ugly head or not at all.

In this whole matter of communal living the only practical line of conduct is that of having as few rules and regulations as possible, but making those absolutely cast-iron. One's degree of control, one's degree of discipline, depends on one's own nature, the nature of the group with which one is dealing and indeed on the quality of one's helpers, but no situation, from a happy marriage to a happy week-end, can really survive constant nagging. Neither can a holiday survive a long list of rules which are constantly broken in practice. There is great virtue in making up one's mind what one will stand and what one will not. 'People must always do this, that, or the

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEET

other', is quite futile as a regulation, if in actual practice the very first time they don't do it nothing much happens. We are all rather like the little boy who, on being asked one lunch time why he never washed his hands although he knew perfectly well he would always be asked if he had, and sent to do it, said in aggrieved tones: 'I know it *usually* happens, but *once* it didn't.'

One of the best methods of proceeding, which was tried with success over and over again by an officer responsible for women recruits to the forces, was that of saying: 'Look here, you are breaking rules. Now we cannot have rules broken. I'm terribly sorry that you find it difficult, but you must obey the rules like everyone else. Still, as it seems to be more difficult for you than for most people, what can we do about it? Can you suggest anything that would help, or can you get your friend to help you?' The encouraging thing is that nine times out of ten they *can* suggest something which will help them out. But in this matter, as in so many departments of human life, we have to remember that we all have our failures. Most teachers, whether they call themselves youth leaders or not, in their more honest moments will agree that we all occasionally come across those young people with whom it seems one can do nothing. In all humility and reverence one would do well to remember that even Christ was not successful with all the twelve of his disciples.

Nevertheless, in spite of the many problems and difficulties of organisation, behaviour and equipment, this spending of a week-end, a week, or any holiday with people is something which is often, indeed more often than not, dynamic or creative, and one of the finest pieces of informal education.

One of the most interesting things about the rapid development of Youth Service work in the last five years has been the increase of the fortnightly residential course and the week-end residential course for club leaders and helpers. Teachers are accustomed to such methods of spending their free time in Summer Schools and holiday courses, but it has been a delightful experience to see men and women from all walks of life, blacksmiths, clergymen, shop assistants, insurance clerks,

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEET

factory workers and policemen, husbands and wives, all meeting together and enjoying the study of their common interest.

The Community Centres Association Conferences before the war were a similar inspiration in the gathering together of ordinary people who were anxious to obtain further knowledge about their common problems and who were thrilled to view it against the wider background of expert knowledge and widely differing experiences.

A most moving experience was that of accompanying two members of a Tenants' Association to a regional Community Centres Conference. The chosen delegates were two housewives from a slum clearance housing estate. Neither of them had ever before left their families for a week-end since their marriage; one of them had never travelled so far afield before (a matter of fifty miles!). They were both vastly intrigued at receiving hospitality in the homes of tenants on a housing estate which differed in every detail from their own, and their report to their own association on their return was a high tribute to the educational value of the experience, while the interest which it aroused in their own locality was no less educational in the best sense of that word.

In Youth Service, in Community Centre work, in the N.F.S., A.R.P. and the Services, large numbers of ordinary adults met together and enjoyed both the opportunity of an exchange of views and also of expert instruction during the war years. It would be a thousand pities if, having widened the horizons of so many people in this way, the good work should come to an end. People who would never have dreamed of a 'week-end course' as a pleasant method of using their free time became accustomed to it in the war, for extra training in Civil Defence, Fire Service instruction and countless other matters. Those enterprising Education Authorities who could continue this work in comfortable and well-equipped houses, fairly accessible, and with attractive meals and good sleeping arrangements, would be doing a marvellous piece of further education—especially if they would make it possible for the children of such families to be accommodated and entertained while the older groups held their discussions. One

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEET

or two Education Authorities have obtained the use of large houses which are now the property of the County Council, and which they propose to use as emergency training centres for teachers, and subsequently as conference centres, centres for refresher courses for teachers and youth leaders, and residential colleges—cultural, technical and vocational—open to all residents in the County.

It is to be hoped, however, that in our enthusiasm for the long course, and out of the admiration which we justly pay to the type of residential adult education favoured in Scandinavian countries, we will not fail to consider as our first priority the week-end school for large numbers of people, young and old, and the extension of facilities for really worth-while holidays.

It is true that there were more than 200 residential colleges for adult education in the four Scandinavian countries before the war, and that in each year about 6,000 adults attended such colleges in Sweden, and between 7,000 and 8,000 in Denmark. It is also true that before the war we had only nine such colleges, with about three hundred students. But the parallel is not perhaps a fair one when one considers the advantages which seasonal occupation gives to an agricultural community in Scandinavian countries. A congested industrial community postulates a very different problem. The rhythm of work is different and can less easily be interrupted by long spells of absence such as are possible in winter months in a farming country. Moreover, adult education in Denmark has concentrated on the young adult, whereas in this country it has in the past attracted people, if it has attracted them at all, at intervals throughout adult life. Nevertheless, it is obvious that we too need more places where long courses of study lasting several months are available for those who desire them, so that at least once in their lives every man and woman has the chance to fill some of the gaps which any type of education must leave, especially in a world of change. Places must be found where people may have the chance to resume education, to revive old interests and develop new ones, to learn and to think about current issues of the day, and about the eternal problems of politics, religion and life.

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEET

We must not close our eyes, however, to the fact that such institutions will be costly, since few will be able to afford to take advantage of such facilities unless they are substantially subsidised, and unless employees can be released from work with an assurance that they will be allowed to return to it. Although there is likely to be a sufficient demand from the adult population, yet very few people are likely in the near future to attend courses of several months' duration.

The establishment of short courses lasting a fortnight, a week or even a week-end is, however, free from these disadvantages and it is to be hoped that more and more enterprising Local Education Authorities will take over country houses and indulge in a constant series of holiday courses.

It is evident from the experience in army education that there is scope for short courses of a week or a fortnight if these are devoted seriously to education. But it is confusing to refer to such centres as 'residential colleges'. Moreover it is to be hoped that the recreational element may figure largely in at least some of the projected schemes, and there seems no real reason why this should not be one of the definite purposes of such centres.

As a result of the gradual extension of holidays with pay, there is a definite need, first and foremost, to provide facilities whereby young and old may obtain the greatest possible benefit from their annual holiday.

One cannot seriously believe that most people would be twice as much benefited by a fortnight in Blackpool rather than a week, or by a fortnight of day trips rather than a week, and it would seem that if people are to take full advantage of their holidays one has a duty to put before them for due consideration all the various types of holidays in which it is possible to indulge. It is still possible, for instance, to come across many people, old and young, whose idea of a holiday is limited to the day trip or the visit to near-by relatives. It is not only in such places as Oldham that one can find youngsters like the one who said: 'I'm going away for my holiday next week,' and when asked 'Where?' (a question one need not ask in Wakes week, when Blackpool becomes known as 'Oldham-by-the-sea') answered: 'To Cheshire.' To the further question:



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEET

'Where in Cheshire?' the astounding answer was: 'Oh, to stay with my aunt in Greenfields.' Greenfields is a twopenny bus ride out of the town, though it is, to be sure, just over the border from Lancashire! It is still possible to meet young people in some of the Yorkshire towns who, on their first week-end in the country which lies almost on their doorsteps, will say to you: 'Why didn't anyone tell us how nice it was out here?' And it is still possible to meet in London the type of youngster who does not think it odd to have such limited possibilities for holidays as the one who said: 'I'm going for my holidays next week.' When asked where, he said: 'To my Grandma's,' and in response to the question: 'Where does she live?' he replied 'Upstairs.'

It has been fashionable in certain circles, especially among the fresh air fiends and 'country life' brigade, the whole 'roughing it' school of thought, in fact, to pour scorn upon such holiday experiments as those of Butlin's Camps; and the farther away one has stayed from them, the more virulent apparently one's criticism can be. But Butlin has the right idea, and he knows all about comfort. He himself says that he got the idea from America, where holiday camps are provided for wealthy people. These American holiday camps are rather like shooting boxes, with golf courses, bathing pools and restaurants 'laid on'. Butlin wanted to adapt this idea in order to provide something which would cater for people of moderate means, who were far more in need of holidays than these wealthy Americans.

Butlin provided for the middle income group an individual chalet on the sea-shore, dining-halls where their own table was reserved throughout their stay, swimming pools, bowling greens, putting greens, dance bands and concerts at prices ranging from three to three and a half guineas per week. It is easy to be snobbish about the vast crowds of people who congregated together in this way; but it is not everyone who wants to go out like Kipling's cat, 'in the Wild, Wet woods, walking by his wild lone', and anyway it is difficult to do so if you have two or three small children. Not the least of Butlin's attractions was the fact that children were provided with their own playground and paddling pool, and a trained staff to

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEET

look after them. In fact he provided many thousands of people with a family holiday without tears, catering in the year 1939 for over a hundred thousand visitors. It is true that the holidays were organised, but then so is any holiday which is run for a party, and no-one was obliged to indulge in all the activities unless so minded. Nevertheless, Butlin did find that astonishingly large numbers took part not only in the evening dances, but in the concerts and in the Sunday services. As he himself says about them: 'Organised holidays, I grant you, but holidays in which every moment is replete with interest, diversion, health and if I may suggest it, uplift.' These holidays satisfied 'the demand of the rank and file for vacations utterly dissimilar from the hackneyed, aimless and generally unsatisfying holidays of tradition'.

How does this really differ in fact from what every organiser of a summer school, conference, or camp intends? One cannot help wishing that a good many theorists would go to the Butlin camps and learn by helping there, except that one is quite sure Mr. Butlin would have no use for them unless they were first-class of their kind. Much as one hates the word 'uplift', it must be admitted that one of the most devastating commentaries on human life is the deadly dullness of people's approach to their holidays. One can never make up one's mind whether those who go every year to the same place are the most to be pitied, or those who must go every year to a new place, a bigger, better, more expensive place. Actually, holidays whether they last for a week-end or a week can seldom consist of more than five different ingredients. In the first place they may consist of recreation only, but recreation of itself is apt to get very boring unless one is so hard worked that what one really needs is not a holiday but a nursing home. Secondly, there is the type of holiday which can combine recreation with a certain amount of incidental education, and many people only need a little help to achieve this. Thirdly, there is the holiday which can combine recreation with a certain amount of deliberate education, and many so-called summer schools and courses manage to achieve this, though there has been a regrettable tendency of recent years to crowd the programmes far too much—a tendency which crept in during the war years

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEET

as a consequence of a feeling of guilt at having any sort of holiday during those difficult times. Then there is the type of holiday which combines recreation with a certain amount of service to the community, usually the service of working with one's hands at some unaccustomed job. This was the sort of holiday which university students were apt to take from time to time when they helped with building schemes such as that of Iona, or in making recreation grounds and parks in the mining villages of South Wales. During the war such schemes as that run by the Youth Service Volunteers, whose job is that of helping in harvest camps, had the same measure of community service. Lastly there is the type of holiday which may be a mixture of service and education, or of all these other ingredients.

In any holiday education it is wise to begin gently with a great deal of recreation, and perhaps to begin with purely recreational week-ends and to proceed only very gradually to week-ends of more concentrated study. When large numbers of people have been converted to taking such week-ends periodically, it is almost certain that they will never waste their longer holidays so dismally again.

Moreover, just as there is nothing quite like that expansion of the spirit which comes with one's first holiday abroad, so there is nothing more dynamic in its effect than one's first experience of meeting together in a community engaged in living and learning. Furthermore, in a world where labour may have to be more mobile than ever before, it is in itself a service to the community to educate people to leave home occasionally and live with others, quite apart from educating people to enjoy and profit from holidays with pay.

That an extension of provision for holidays with a purpose would be enthusiastically supported was proved up to the hilt in the war years. Even the 'Holiday at Home' schemes of the war years showed that people welcomed a holiday which gave point and purpose to their visit to their local parks and recreation grounds by providing them with excellent concerts and plays. It is interesting to note in this particular that the plays which were most successful were those of Shaw and Shakes-

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEET

peare. The 'park holiday' has its definite place in the scheme of things, both for the opportunity it might give people to see good plays and hear good music, and for the fact that this is one of the few places to which the family can go as a unit and find something for the interest and delight of each of a group.

Indeed, during the war years, it was the limitation of accommodation and the difficulties of feeding and transport which proved the greatest obstacles, and not by any means the lack of enthusiasm for education week-ends, holiday courses and community week-ends. However, one must not lose sight of the fact that if a week-end, or indeed a week's holiday, is to include some definite programme of study, the approach must not be too heavy-handed, particularly if it is catering for large numbers of people who are not accustomed to this type of holiday. For instance, in week-end studies of Russia, which can become a very deep and controversial business, it was found better to start with such a session as one called: 'A night-out in Russia'. After all, Saturday night at home is traditionally a 'night-out', and if people have sacrificed their night-out in favour of some education, the least one can do is to make them enjoy the vicarious experience of a night-out in some other country. Such a talk really develops into a study of the Russian theatre, and the Russian film. One begins by imagining that the group is a Russian family. It is *Petrushka's* birthday. How could we spend the evening? The audience is invited to choose where they will go to have a meal in the first place, and having got there they can be invited to choose what they will eat. They then consider whether to go to the theatre or cinema, and they proceed to the sort of programme they would probably enjoy. Actually it makes very little difference whether people decide to go to the theatre or the cinema, since one can always work in: 'Well, now, if you had chosen to go to the cinema (or theatre) we would have done this, that or the other.' But the audience likes to feel that the choice is in its hands. An Empire week-end gives similar opportunities to take people to two different types of theatre in India, a China week-end gives an opportunity to describe a Chinese theatre and to contrast it with the native theatre in China or

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEET

with the 'No drama' of Japan. It is always good to bring the film to one's aid over educational week-ends of this kind, for seeing a flick is another familiar and therefore unfrighting week-end activity.

During the war years the Governments of the various nationals resident in England and the Ministry of Information were most generous with material and help, and it is surely not too optimistic to suppose that help so liberally given in war years could be extended in times of peace. One of the most important contributions can be made by the nationals of other countries resident here who are prepared to devote some of their week-ends to promoting both a study of their country and international understanding. Probably no one person did more to further friendly Anglo-American relations than Miss Louise Morley of the American Ministry of War Information, who devoted much of her time to visiting schools and youth groups, week-end conferences, holiday courses and the like, explaining America to British audiences. No-one has done more to give young people a line on the different behaviour problems as between the two nations, and it is to be hoped that the Ministry of Education, the Foreign Office and the Dominions Office will go very much further in future in providing education at this level by employing at least one national of every country whose main concern shall be the informal education of youth and adult groups concerning the problems, policy and culture of their homelands.

One of the most worthwhile experiments in educational week-ends was one conducted at Kendal, where a group of young people met a group of evacuated French boys and girls. The language problem was a little difficult, but they managed very nicely by laying the emphasis on things that did not demand too great an understanding of a foreign language. They did a great deal of folk dancing, the French teaching the English their dances and vice versa. They indulged in a great many mimed games. When it came to tea-time even this proved to be an Anglo-French alliance, since the English brought enough food for two and the French provided the tea. There was a fairly extensive film display and community singing proved an additional help in making people



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEET

learn at least a few phrases of a language which was not their own.

It is indeed astonishing on considering the many programmes of educational week-ends of this kind to discover what a variety of educational material is being offered, and quite obviously enjoyed, by widely differing groups all over the country in spite of all the difficulties connected with work, transport and accommodation.

People have come together to discuss reading and films, religion and art, education and industrial problems, housing and citizenship. Much has been done to break down the barriers which are said to be so high between town and country. Young people from Whitechapel have been the guests of young people in Manchester, young people from Derbyshire have visited London, and constant exchanges between other counties have been arranged. The young people who have visited London have usually indulged in a programme which should give them some idea of their responsibilities as future citizens of a great nation, and have eagerly welcomed opportunities to visit Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's and the Houses of Parliament. They have visited the International Youth Centre and exchanged ideas with young people of diverse educational, social and economic backgrounds, and they have taken endless trouble to search for information on topics which interested them at the headquarters of many a National body. A most encouraging feature of week-ends of this kind is that there never seems to be enough time to answer all the questions that come pouring in after people have seen films, or dancing (if it is a week-end on another country), or after they have listened to music or heard the problems of various workers in whatever field of social problems they may be discussing. A group in Kent fired questions at the lecturer after a week-end which had been held under the greatest of difficulties, coming as it did after a heavy week of raids and a traditional English Sunday dinner, and the members having gone back to their own areas were still lively enough to keep writing for further information.

Not only are these educational week-ends valuable in themselves, but one finds that a group that has given a whole

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEET

week-end to a particular subject will go back to formulate for themselves a whole winter programme based on that particular experience. For instance one group, who took part in a week-end on America in the early summer, went back to their own groups and during the winter, with the help of their leader, organised a programme which included film shows and lectures and visits of various nationals on the following topics: 'Germany's Youth'; 'Burma as I saw it'; 'The Gold Coast'; 'India'; 'My country, Denmark'; 'The Kaburrig Plot' and 'South African farming'. Another group, which had spent a week-end considering various informal approaches to religion, during the winter which followed produced a monthly play reading, saw a series of religious films, and made a very beautiful log book in which texts from various parts of the Scriptures were written out and illustrated with verse and music and extracts from the lives of great men, and so on. The book was enlivened by pictures cut out from such books as *Chinese Art and Christianity*. Although the week-end itself is important, in nine cases out of ten it is the encouragement it gives people to go forward afterwards that is the great contribution to the adventure we call education.

Following on the week-end of recreation plus incidental education, possibly the most profitable step is towards the week-end with a definite programme of study. During the war years the favourite topic was how people lived in other countries, particularly in countries which were fighting side by side with us. Education week-ends on such countries as Russia, America, the Empire and China were always remarkable for the number of young people who registered for them. On one occasion, not long before D-day, a group gathered together in South Wales for an Empire week-end, and one of the most astonishing features, to the organisers at least, was that several of the boys, having found it impossible to get time off for the Saturday afternoon, had of their own free will worked two double shifts to get two days off, which meant that some of them came to the Saturday afternoon conference having had no sleep for forty-eight hours, and yet were sufficiently keen to take notes, to listen to all that was said and to ask intelligent questions.

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEET

It is not only the promotion of international friendship that can be achieved through the informal week-end. There are almost no limits to the programme of educational week-ends which can combine both a change of air and scenery and study of some kind. Groups of young people have spent week-ends studying the problems of youth in industry. Large numbers of groups have studied various aspects of reconstruction from housing to education. In Westmorland a group of young people has developed the habit of meeting together at fairly regular intervals, forming themselves into an association called the Community of Cressbrook.<sup>1</sup> On 1 April 1945, Education's D-day, they met together to celebrate the day when the new Education Act came into operation. A young man, who belonged to this group of Cressbrookians and was later called up, wrote from rear headquarters of 21 Army Group B.L.A. on 9 February 1945: 'The spirit in the B.L.A. convinces me that there is no more important work in the world than the kind you are sponsoring in the Cressbrook programme. . . . The spirit of Cressbrook is badly needed in the world.' Another young man writes about the same spirit: 'I think the greatest "something" that anyone gets from an experience like Cressbrook is the one of living together. At the beginning of the week everyone starts off by being strangers, and at the end of the week they are friends. This is due I think to the living together; it is much more satisfactory than just meeting throughout the day for a set number of sessions. Because of this working and playing together you feel much more at ease with everyone. At night whilst in bed some very interesting conversations take place, and it is seldom anyone fails to join in; this comradeship would be lost if a course like Cressbrook was not residential. And it is a very important part of our life at Cressbrook, because some of the members of the course were very shy early on in the week. This was apparent in a number of ways, e.g., by friends keeping together at meal times and at the social hour, and by the very few who took advantages of the showers after P.T. To a boy who has lived by himself, the first two days

<sup>1</sup>See Chapter 5, *The Great Adventure*, by N. and J. H. Higginson, University of London Press, for a fuller account of Cressbrook and similar week-end experiments.

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEET

are an ordeal. But gradually this shyness was lost and in its place was friendship; at meal times members kept changing places so as to be able to talk to someone else; in the social hour and on walks this mixing was very evident, and I would unhesitatingly say that this living together was one of the most important gains.

‘Secondly I would place the practical gain of learning the best ways of conducting club meetings, how to introduce your speakers properly, and many other details regarding the various duties of club members. . . . I feel a great improvement in my own methods and I know from talking to other course members that they benefited the same.

‘And finally you were given much wider interests. You were taught how to judge and make decisions of your own; how to read the news, etc., intelligently; how books, poetry, religion, painting, music and many other interests do affect you. I know that this spark started at Cressbrook is carried on throughout the year and this widening is a very important gain indeed.

‘A week like Cressbrook does make you realise how very vividly it is necessary for a citizen to be alive and useful to his or her community. It teaches you to listen to someone else’s opinion besides your own, and how to respect that person because of that view. It does stop you being selfish and I saw a few instances of sharing that proved the gain of Cressbrook. It is a marvellous experience and one that Westmorland can be very proud of.’

This is one of many tributes to the value of making explorations with the feet the introduction to exploration with the mind. In the beginning one’s progress may be slow, in the early days getting fifty people to promise to come away for a week-end is often a triumph of optimism and organisation. Such a group often represents fifty unpredictable factors and the most one can expect in the way of reliability is that one won’t be able to eat anything that is provided, at least six will fail to turn up with no word of explanation, and another member of the party will ‘feel queer’ all the time. But the unpredictable factors make the adventure—and if one has the necessary patience and the essential faith in human beings the approach to informal education through the feet can

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEET

eventually be measured in terms of the basic aspects of living. It can encourage people in the achievement of personal wholeness, it can make for satisfactory relationships with the family, with friends and with work-mates, it can make some contribution towards employability and vocational competence, and it can give opportunities for intelligent participation in those democratic practices which are involved in membership of any community—if only for a week-end.



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE WORK OF THE HANDS

---

Pride in Work; Job Snobbery; Industrial  
Conditions and Education; Initiation Ceremonies;  
the Romance of Industry; Work and the Law;  
Crafts and Co-operative Effort

---

*'We have gone so far as to divorce work from culture and to think of culture as something to be acquired in hours of leisure; but there can be only a hot-house and unreal culture when work itself is not its means; if culture does not show itself in all we make we are not cultured.'*—

DR. ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY: *Why Exhibit Works of Art?*

THE work of the hands is much more than a question of how to employ one's hands in leisure time. We are not therefore primarily concerned here with leisure-time crafts, but with the question of how to approach the informal education of leisure time through the work done by people as a means of livelihood.

It is fashionable to say that we have lost pride in craftsmanship, and it is customary to blame all this on the fact that we live in a machine age. Indeed, the Industrial Revolution has become almost a substitute for the mediaeval belief in the Evil Eye—the twentieth century bogey. Nevertheless, there are some important things to remember. As we do happen to live in a machine age we must learn to cope with it, and therefore educate ourselves to this end. We cannot put the clock back, the machine is here with us, and those who spend a large part of their time in condemning it would be the first to grumble if they were denied modern sanitation, the bus, the sewing-machine and lawn-mower, and all the cheap commodities made possible by mass production. They might even wail to be allowed to keep their wireless sets!

Moreover there is a great deal of intellectual as well as emotional dishonesty concerning the Industrial Revolution.

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE HANDS

Dirt and disease were not the invention of the Industrial Revolution, but drains and a cheap water supply did follow upon man's mastery of the machine. Even the exploitation of child labour was not initiated with the Industrial Revolution, but the exploitation of child labour during the early years of the Industrial Revolution was the direct cause of the agitation for factory laws. Above all, the Industrial Revolution is responsible for giving mankind the priceless gift of leisure.

Until the introduction of the machine there were two classes, the working classes and the leisured classes. Now the worker also has leisure and is faced with the problem and the duty of learning to use it wisely. Man's complete mastery over the machine has not yet been achieved; we are still living in a phase of the Industrial Revolution. Scientific discovery is perhaps still in its infancy, but since it has already liberated man from a life which condemned him to an alternation of work and bed, bed and work, the time has come when one must pay some attention to the uses to which that liberation may be put.

No-one would deny that monotony and process work can be soul-destroying, but they need not be so, if a careful consideration is made of the balance between work and leisure, rest and change. It is unfortunate that the more clever a machine is the less brains it takes to work it (though the more brain it takes to maintain it). The cleverer the machine is, however, the more interested young people are in the work that that machine does. It is not true to say that it is only technical students and evening institute pupils who take pride in their proficiency, and those who talk about the decay of pride in one's craft would do well to mix a little more with apprentice engineers and young people learning their craft on Clydeside, and indeed the fully experienced and skilled collier. (Nothing is more galling to the average worker in the mine than the public's unawareness of the skill it takes to be a collier and ignorance about the different types of skill needed in mining.) Pride in craftsmanship and skill is still part of the very make-up of the great bulk of British artisans. Though the apprentice system has died on us, the high ideal of learning your craft and the

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE HANDS

acute dissatisfaction felt by the sixteen-year-old who is not 'learning his trade properly' are a very real feature of British life.

If one needed convincing, this point was brought home very vividly in one of the 'To Start You Talking' broadcasts. Dr. Margaret Mead, the eminent American sociologist, was talking to a group of British boys and girls about American education. They were fascinated by the possibilities of two extra years in which to learn more about music, art, and so forth. When, however, Margaret Mead pointed out that if you wished to obtain technical efficiency you would have to be prepared for a further period of training, that you can't have it both ways—both wide and deep—there was general uneasiness. One of the young engineer apprentices said with all the emphasis of his seventeen years: 'Well, that wouldn't do for us chaps—we like to learn our trade early. Why, we're proud of our skill—Britain leads the world in skilled craftsmanship.' In fact, if we can't have it both ways we'll cling to our skill. This feeling is very general among all young people who have any technical bent. It is because of this pride in skill that so many thousands all through the years have attended Night Schools three and four nights of the week, often in conditions of indescribable discomfort.

But this pride in skill and fondness for a man's own work is found almost everywhere. The man who drives a taxi is as proud of it as, we are told, the driver of a team of horses used to be of his horses. The engine driver and the worker on the footplate are fond of their engines. Sailors are proverbially fond of their ships. Two grocers' assistants from rival stores will talk with great pride of the merits of the commodities sold by their respective firms. And 'You wouldn't get away with that in our firm' is a matter of boasting and pride.

For some reason or other, however, people are unwilling to admit that this pride in the job exists in the average worker. Much harm is being done and much discontent is being created and fostered by those well-meaning people who try to persuade others that they are merely cogs in the wheels of industry and the victims of monopoly, and that therefore they ought to be unhappy. Nowhere is this more true than in the

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE HANDS

homes of England. One might imagine from hearing some people talk that because mothers and wives are doing repetitive work they too must be taken out of the home, where only the unintelligent could bear to stay! To someone who has never tried it, the planning of meals for a family of mother, father and three or four children, indeed the planning of the day's work in such a household, not to mention the carrying out of such work, may seem repetitive to the verge of madness, it may seem to demand merely low grade skill. But the demands of a household in the matter of meals, in the matter of cleanliness, in the matter of amusing, educating and caring for the young people and seeing that everyone in the house gets a square deal, is, in actual fact, a species of statesmanship demanding diplomacy, inventiveness and administrative capacity in a degree which would tax the powers of many of those who affect to despise the work. We cannot judge the work of another until we have tried it ourselves, and even then all we know about it is whether *we* can do that work or whether *we* cannot do it. Looking after a family, going from Board meeting to Board meeting, eternal adding and subtracting, multiplying and dividing, serving in a tea-shop or minding a machine may seem purgatory to some of us, but we have no business to project those feelings (which we have every right to possess) on to people who are occupied in these ways. It is the same attitude which tries to convince people that if they are engaged on any piece of machinery, if they are in any type of employment which demands heavy muscular skill, if they are in a packing department or any of the distributive trades or in a factory, they are doing something less than they might be doing. Now the great danger about despising any job is that inevitably it becomes increasingly difficult to stop first of all pitying, and then despising, the person who does it.

Such an attitude is necessarily serious at a time when, whatever other uncertainties there are about the post-war world, one certainty sticks out a mile—the openings in industry for professional and skilled, even semi-skilled persons, will be limited in number and will show (for a number of years at any rate) a tendency to *decrease*, while the further mechanisation of industry (extended to an almost incredible extent in the war

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE HANDS

years) and the increase of mass production (extended now to those last strongholds of the skilled workman, building and agriculture) will mean the tendency to *increase* rather than diminish the numbers of young people who will find their only hope of employment in unskilled work.

The root of the trouble is not that people are necessarily wildly unhappy in monotonous jobs, nor that they are employed in vast and soulless concerns, but that the increasing use of mechanical processes in production has seriously reduced the necessity for training. Hence, in some firms, particularly small ones, the old form of apprenticeship, which provided a personal bond between the employer and the apprentice, has almost ceased to exist, because long-term apprenticeship or training is not necessary for semi-skilled or unskilled work. On the other hand, whilst formal apprenticeships have thus disappeared, the needs of industry in its skilled branches have become more exacting.

As manufacturing processes have become more and more subdivided machinery has tended to displace the craftsman's skill, and even though pride in efficiency remains, the personal loyalty between the employer and the young worker is weakened. The employer now aims at increasing profits through maximum production and the necessity for training the majority of new entrants has disappeared. In the large firm, instead of the employer taking an active part in the personnel management, the Planning Officer has become the centre of control; the machine sets the pace for the worker; each job is timed and paid for accordingly. Consequently, employers are not now interested in the training of the majority of young people, except in so far as that training affects their production, and in a limited amount of specialised training for specially skilled jobs.

New conditions of production demand that new methods of training should be adopted. In a modern engineering works for instance, the personnel needed can be classified in roughly the following manner: 10 per cent technical staff, who need a broad industrial experience and thorough technical training (such workers would include Costing, Planning for Production, Drawing Office staff); 25 per cent skilled workers, who need



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE HANDS

a thorough technical training; and lastly 65 per cent semi-skilled workers who need a very limited training and unskilled workers who need no industrial training.

It is almost certain that post-war production methods will bring about a large increase in both technical staffs and semi-skilled workers, but these increases will diminish the proportion not of *unskilled* but of skilled craftsmen. Hence the problem on the side of training is that of finding young workers, 10 per cent of whom will be capable of undertaking training for highly technical personnel and 25 per cent of whom will become skilled workers.

The important factor, however, is the 65 per cent semi-skilled and unskilled workers who will constitute the hard core of the problem of the workaday world of the future, together with those in very small offices and businesses where from their very nature and size there can be little or no organised welfare and supervision and where, alas, conditions often leave much to be desired.

It is foolish to talk about training therefore for about 65 per cent of the world's industrial workers, since their work will demand very little skill. What is needed is some safeguard that boys and girls who enter such trades will have some compensation, both within and without their working life.

In the first place, vocational guidance is not only necessary for the highly skilled, there is a great deal of variation in aptitude for various types of unskilled work, and the young worker should be helped by aptitude tests and by whatsoever other means can be devised to find the right unskilled job for *him* or *her*.

It has been assumed for too long that if one hasn't the aptitude for a skilled job it matters little what dull job you do. Dull repetitive or monotonous jobs are *not* all much of a muchness. Moreover, monotony is on the whole far more felt by the visitor than by the worker, while a great many jobs are much more skilful than they look. Nevertheless, as careful assistance should be given to young people to find the right unskilled job for them as is given to the skilled to find their proper niche. There is as much serious danger to industry and

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE HANDS

to the very happiness and well-being of the community in being casual about the 65 per cent as there is in being casual about the 35 per cent.

Secondly, having entered employment, the worker, no matter what his job, must be given a clear picture of the whole nature of the work and of the importance of his own share in it, both while at work and in his leisure-time education.

Many large firms have realised the far-reaching possibilities in carefully planning the introduction of the worker to the firm. Such firms do not set the young person a job and tell him to 'get on with it' but first pass him through a 'reception' course, during which the various regulations of the factory, the type of article or commodity dealt with and the various types of production followed are all explained and demonstrated. He is then told of the need for care in operating the machines in order to avoid personal accidents, shown his own job in relation to the whole, allowed to spend a little time in the various departments and given every opportunity to move comfortably through the transition period of being a pupil to that of being a worker.

More factories are taking a great deal of trouble nowadays to explain to their work-people exactly *why* Nut 935 is so valuable in the finished product, and they are united in declaring how much better people work when they know the importance of what they are doing. During the war, exhibitions were arranged to show the mill-workers of Lancashire and the linen workers of Belfast (to give only two examples) exactly how and in what a variety of ways the cotton and linen which they produced was used in the manufacture of the weapons of war and the equipment of men in every branch of the armed Forces. This is all very right and proper, and a step in the right direction. People need to feel valuable and to feel that the job which they do is worth while and has a definite place in the scheme of things; but what was true and necessary in war-time is also true and even more vital in peace. The employers have got hold of the right end of things (whether for the wrong reasons is immaterial at the moment).

In smaller concerns, however, it is seldom that a new worker

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE HANDS

is taken round the factory or workshop where he will be employed. Consequently he often has little idea of the value of the type of work upon which he is engaged. Sometimes he is given a few minutes' instruction, after which he must proceed on his own. It is seldom that any explanation is given of the type of production undertaken by the firm, and the young worker is unable, with his limited knowledge, to see the essential nature of his particular job.

It may be that this careful introduction is impracticable in smaller concerns; and if this is the case those responsible for the workers' leisure-time education must redress the balance, for the majority of people do not work in firms employing vast numbers. Ninety per cent of the employers of labour in this country employ under fifty workers, and even in iron, steel and textiles 84 per cent, 75 per cent and 89 per cent respectively employ less than two hundred people. Even with the re-organisation of the war years and the concentration of industry there are only 5,000 factories in this country which employ over one thousand workers and most of the other firms employ 250 people or less. On the whole the worst conditions exist among the small employers of labour, and it is the small employers who in aggregate employ most British labour. It is all those young people in the dead-end occupations, such as errand-boys, ice-cream vendors, as well as the shop assistant in the small shop, the 'little dressmaker's' assistant, the small office servant and the domestic servant (where such still exist), whose conditions of work and monotony of employment are often the hardest to bear and whose welfare is the least safeguarded.

A consideration of all these factors makes it quite clear that one must provide an education which will not only teach clever people a job but teach people the essential nature of the most unskilled job. After all, the only way to see most jobs is to see them as a whole, to take the boring parts with the exciting parts and relate them both to the end we are all working for, to see the most boring part of the most dull job not as dull or frustrating, but as *useful*—useful to humanity. Looked at in this way, it is probably only the more exotic of the luxury trades which it would be excessively difficult to invest with the

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE HANDS

sense of being worth while; and even there, to help to make something which gives even momentary happiness is surely no vain thing. When all has been said about education, human beings attain self-fulfilment by finding the work for which they are best fitted, and there is no higher service the individual can render the community than to place his skill at the community's disposal, even if that means working painstakingly, reliably, efficiently at a so-called unskilled job.

Because of the lack of understanding of the demands of industry and the true purpose of education, there has grown up a new heresy which can only be called job snobbery. Increasing numbers of parents and young people, teachers and youth leaders, seem to be imbued with the idea that there are only about four jobs which are really 'worth doing' in the fullest sense of the phrase. Apparently it is a worthy thing to be a doctor, or a teacher, or a youth leader, and in some circles (though not all, one regrets to observe) a parson: these are the jobs of the 'elect'. People engaged in these occupations are doing a 'far, far better thing' than the rest of the community, and apparently should be 'looked up to' and paid accordingly.

Yet, in the preservation of health in any given town, one pauses to wonder whether in actual fact a greater contribution is made by the doctors than by the dustmen. After all, with reasonable luck the doctor may not call for six months or a year; but what if the dustman failed to call for six months? Again, even teachers and parsons have to be clothed in order to do their work; is it therefore any less worthy to weave the cloth and even measure it and pack it into a parcel in the drapery store, since these valuable people have not the time nor the talent to do it themselves? It is also necessary that they should eat; is it then a less worthy occupation to be engaged in growing food and cooking meals and serving in the grocery store where 'the elect' buy their goods? Lip service of course is paid to their usefulness, but few people behave or talk as if they knew with their hearts as well as with their heads how valuable all these jobs really are.

Next in the hierarchy of worth-while jobs, apparently, come the higher ranks of the Civil Service, the business man (the

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE HANDS

bigger the better), the lawyer, the banker and the stockbroker. Theirs are felt to be 'good' jobs—not in the first rank as valuable, but because such professions are well paid. To make money is a 'Good Thing' (in the 1066 *And All That* meaning of the phrase). 'I wanted to be a scientific research worker,' said a public school boy, 'but my father said: "My boy, when we want a scientist in the works we can buy the best brains in the country for a thousand a year; you come in with me and you'll be making five times that in five years or so."'

At all economic levels this feeling that education ought to be translatable in cash value is becoming a fixed idea. It would be bad enough if people merely went on paying the old homage to certain professions, and to makers of money, but now there is not only a mad scramble for the jobs themselves, but for the education necessary to secure such jobs. The provision of secondary education for all will in no wise put a stop to this. Already teachers are viewing with grave concern the deep laid plots which parents are hatching to secure the entrance of their children to the type of secondary school which will bring—in their view—the best chances of education for the best type of job. Education is measured in terms of the job gained afterwards; always we talk of education *for* this, that and the other, not education so that we may live life more abundantly.

How many mothers there are who say: 'We kept our Mary in school till she was sixteen and yet she's *only* serving in Woolworth's', and how many fathers who say: 'Well, Bill went to the secondary school and what did he do—at sixteen he came out and started at the *same* job in the *same* works at the *same* pay as his brother Ernie who left at fourteen. His education didn't do *him* any good.' At the other end of the economic scale, mother complains: 'Well, we sent Diana to one of the best schools, she had a year at a finishing school in Brussels and after she came out . . . well, she didn't seem to be settling down, so she went out on the fishing fleet to India—and even then she didn't attract a suitable young man and when she came back she *only* married a bank clerk! It's been a great disappointment to her father and me.' While father says:



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE HANDS

'David had the best of everything—a good public school, a couple of years at Cambridge, got to know all the right people and so on, and what's he done—never been interested in anything but fiddling about with machines, and now he's got hold of his grandmother's money he's opened a garage—a garage, mind you. It's broken his mother's heart.' All these people are convinced that education must be 'for' something, and that something a 'better job'.

One finds this job snobbery rampant even among the more thoughtful of our adolescents, and it is revealed most in their discussions about education. In almost every group there is usually someone who says: 'Well, when we are all better educated who will do the dull jobs—in factories, and dirty jobs like sweeping chimneys and so on?' In any factual talk about the Russian education system, sooner or later pat comes the question: 'Well, who does the ordinary dull sort of jobs? Are there any people willing to do these if they *all* get a chance to train for other jobs?'

Practically nowhere does one find the feeling that *any* job which gives the community something it needs is a good job, a worth-while job, even if it is 'only' serving in Woolworth's or the greengrocer's. But surely one cannot ask people to be good and useful citizens and join debating classes and discussion groups and take an interest in politics, if at the same time parents, teachers, youth leaders and others are telling them (under the guise of sympathy) what morons they are to be doing the job that they are, in fact, doing. Until parents, teachers and youth leaders (the parsons always seem to be less guilty on this score) are prepared to view each job in the light of whether it is a good job for that particular child, and whether the hours of work, conditions and pay and holidays are adequate, instead of considering whether it yields a fat packet of money at the end of the month, education will continue to be confused in the popular mind with vocational training. Mary's mother will still feel that if you are 'only going to serve in Woolworth's' secondary education has failed. Bill's father will still feel that if you are 'only a fitter', like Ernie, School Certificate is just hooey. Diana's mother will still feel that a year in Brussels should bring a cash return in the matrimonial

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE HANDS

stakes, and David's father will still fail to see that there might be a worse preparation for running a garage than some years at a public school and Cambridge.

So insidious has this job snobbery become that the average girl in secondary school is ashamed to confess that what she would like to do best is to marry and have babies, and the boy feels that he will not have 'justified his education' unless he gets a certain type of job—teaching, Civil Service, banking and the like. If, alas, the young people do not fit into this pattern they are at a loss; they know what they would have done if they *hadn't* had 'advantages', but what to do now they know not.

As long as job snobbery is such a feature of adult society, parents and teachers can hardly be blamed for being snobbishly selective. It means, however, that young people continue to be submitted to that devastating burden of youth—the burden of fulfilling other people's ambitions for them. It isn't funny to feel that you fall short of what your father desires for you, what your schoolmaster plans for you and what your mother hopes for you; and no matter how many educational changes we have, this will often happen if the measure of one's education is the measure of one's job and the payment for one's job is the measure of one's community value. Even in his ambitions for his children the average man is not overbearing; he would like to give them 'their chance'; but it will be a bad day for the world if nothing is done to counteract the growing belief that his children have not 'had their chances' or made full use of them if they have not been turned into black-coated workers, or well-paid engineers.

We all know this, but more education for all means that we must *believe* it to the extent of allowing children to choose their niches freely *without feeling inferior*. We must believe it to the extent of so ordering our lives, thoughts and words that young people shall not feel that they have somehow failed us if they are happy in the doing of *any* job well. We are so soaked in silly sentiment about monotonous jobs and the machine age and the evils of the Industrial Revolution that we have lost the whole purpose of life because we try to find *all* its purpose in our work.

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE HANDS

It seemed to be the experience of many skilled Juvenile Employment Bureau officers that the young elementary school leaver often had far more idea of what he wanted to be than his brother who had had the advantage of two further years of education. Time after time at interviews the elementary school child would say, for example: 'I want to be a motor mechanic.' And the conversation continued somewhat on these lines: 'Why?' 'Well, I'm interested in cars.' 'How do you know?' 'Do you know anyone who has a car?' 'No, but I always watch cars on the road and take a look at the inside if a man is working on them, and I go down to the garage in X Street on Saturdays.' 'Do you know what you'd be likely to earn?' 'Yes, a boy in X Garage told me. . . .' Or: 'I want to be a brick-layer.' 'Why?' 'Well, I like outdoor life and building is a good trade, my Dad says.' 'Well, pretend this is a brick, and show me how you would begin to lay it. . . . Why did you pick it up with your left hand?' 'Because I'd have the trowel in me right one, sir.' 'How do you know?' 'Well, I've watched men on the buildings.' Truly a case of 'If ye're no eddicated ye have to use your brains'.

A similar type of boy in the secondary school more often responded in this fashion. 'Well, what would you like to be?' 'I don't know. I'd have liked teaching but they say I won't get my School Certificate.' 'Well, what do you like best?' 'I don't know. My mother was thinking perhaps something in the Post Office.' 'Well, what sort of job in the Post Office—sorting, counter work, telephone, machines?' 'I don't know.' Truly like Don Quixote—'Much reading seems to have dried up their brains'.

This eagerness about a job in the elementary school and this lack of interest in so many secondary school pupils is both alarming and distressing when we realise that in future all will be secondary school products. In many cases the child who left school at fourteen was better advised than the secondary school child. The good elementary school headmaster often gave much sound advice to his pupils and made every effort to co-operate with the Juvenile Employment Officer. Only too often Juvenile Employment Officers report however that there is a curious reluctance among secondary school heads to allow

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE HANDS

them to do very much more than give vague 'career talks'. There was a feeling that for the secondary school child to use the Juvenile Employment Bureau was rather *infra dig*. 'Of course, it is only really for the elementary school child, but it does sometimes help some of our failures,' is an astonishingly frequent remark—or 'I can place all my best people myself—I only use the Juvenile Employment Bureau for the duds.'

It is not only in relation to the actual job that this job snobbery is found. Perhaps in no other country in the world (with the possible exception of Germany, whose refugees from Nazi oppression were difficult to place in employment) is there such a general feeling that the possession of 'brains' exempts one from doing 'manual work'.

It begins in schooldays. Directly Mary goes to the secondary school and starts doing homework she is exempt from all domestic chores. A training college lecturer states that one of the most astonishing revelations of the war-time shortage of domestic staff was the ignorance of so many students about domestic duties. The students did the jobs willingly enough, but there was an almost entire absence of skill and of knowledge as to how to tackle ordinary things like washing up or turning out a room, or polishing furniture and silver. It is true that this may sometimes be more affected than real, but that does not materially alter the argument, indeed it illustrates how deep seated this job snobbery is.

Even in Wales, where there is probably less class consciousness than anywhere else in the United Kingdom, and where there have been such great periods of economic distress, students said, without any realisation of the full implications of such remarks, as they dusted out the common room: 'Wouldn't our Mam be surprised to see me now.' 'But don't you help at home?' 'Oh no, I was busy with my homework. Mam always did everything.' During the war students responded manfully to these domestic duties, but so frighteningly often with the sense that they were 'stooping to conquer'.

The American high school child sees nothing wrong in serving coca-cola at the corner drug store on Saturday afternoons in peace-time; the English high school child would be pitied

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE HANDS

if he did so out of economic necessity, and considered a fool if he did so for any other reason. The American student will cheerfully 'work his way through College', but the refugee who was expected to do the same thing felt it an 'insult to his intelligence'. It can be argued that seasonal variations and the less arduous nature of the academic courses often make it easier for the American student to do this. It does not alter the fact that for the most part the British student considers himself 'above' manual labour unless it is in the cause of charity (for instance, helping in Unemployed Camps and the building of recreation grounds, etc., in the vacation). It can further be argued that the student who wishes to do well should be freed from the necessity to earn money—that it is a harmful and unnecessary strain to have to work one's way through College. Indeed most Americans would agree that the system presses very heavily on students taking an exacting course, such as medicine or law. Hence it is not suggested that the student should necessarily indulge in manual labour, but it is suggested that he should not feel himself 'above' manual labour by right of his ability to do mental gymnastics. We must get back something of the spirit which caused the Scots crofter to scrape and save and go to St. Andrew's to read classics and then *return willingly to his croft*, in the sure and certain knowledge that while familiarity with the great thought of Greece brought him no cash return, it gave him a fuller and richer intellectual life and so made him a better crofter. Mary's mother must get hold of the idea that the distributive trades make for the well-being of the community and that Mary is a happier and more valuable server in Woolworth's because two years more in school have given her a taste for reading and the urge to join the Dramatic Society. Bill's father must recognise that Bill will find it less heavy going than was Ernie's lot. Diana's mother will have to pay more than lip service to the belief that a happy marriage to a bank clerk is a better thing for Diana, and for the community, than either frustrated spinsterhood or an unhappy marriage to a wealthy stockbroker. David's father must be prepared to believe that a happy garage manager is of more value to the community than bored sellers of cars on commission.



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE HANDS

This business of happiness matters. Many people in 1870 genuinely feared universal education, as Disraeli did, because he was by no means sure that it might not result in educating 'a nation of clever devils'. This fear was, and probably always will be needless, but we do not want so to order our education that we turn out a nation of 'discontented devils'.

Those who fall back on an economic interpretation of history will assert here that until the doctor and the dustman are *paid* the same, their value to themselves and to the community will not *seem* the same. But is this really true? Are people really only concerned with money? If 'freedom from want'—freedom from the fear of a penniless and dependent old age and the bogey of seasonal unemployment—is removed from everyone, if everyone has a minimum wage which guarantees decent standards of living and a decent chance for his children, need people inevitably only think of jobs in terms of money?

Other objections raised are: 'Until everybody is paid the same, everybody would *rather* be a doctor than a dustman.' Or: 'A doctor's training takes seven years and a dustman's will not take a seventh as long. Is it fair that they should get the same wages at the end? And anyway the responsibility is far greater, and his *expenses* are different.' The truth is that, if people are left alone, they like doing best the things they *can* do best. What drives so many people on into positions in which they are miserable is the ambition which a world of false values thrusts upon them. If a good and worthy carpenter can be sure of respect, of security and a living wage, and if he is given the opportunity to 'matter' in the community, he will be content to remain a good carpenter; if he cannot have those things, he will strain every nerve to be a teacher of woodwork, and possibly not a very good or happy one. The same is true of the good needlewoman; she would be content to be a good dressmaker, rather than an indifferent teacher of needlework.

Already there are increasing numbers of people who have turned aside from business and money making to the Church; people who have left the higher ranks of the Law and Civil Service for social welfare; people who have given up more

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE HANDS

lucrative careers for research of all kinds. It is most emphatically not everyone who thinks of money first. It is the bogey of insecurity, the fear of unemployment and the false values of society which have caused job snobbery, which have imposed on young people the additional burden of doing well, not for themselves, but because of what neighbours would think. In the armed Forces hundreds of perfectly capable soldiers refused promotion because, although they would have liked the extra pay, they did not think they would be equal to the extra responsibility. In the village and small town there are multitudes of craftsmen turning out bags, saddles and baskets who have no desire to do more than make a comfortable living and see that what their hands make shall be good.

Probably nothing will be of more importance in the next fifty years than the two extremes of education—the nursery school and education after leaving school. It will be sheer cruelty if the thousands of school leavers who must go into ‘dull’ jobs are not given the type of further education which will enable them to have, not a soul above those jobs, but a taste for adventure in all the many regions into which further education can take them. Such indeed is the pace of modern life, that the person doing a routine job may well find himself better able in the end to keep his mind supple than the specialist or expert.

The whole question of further education up to eighteen will be acutely affected by the four partners in that education—the teacher, the employer, the child and the parents. The employer, the child and the parent may be unwilling—two of them, the parent and the employer, may be definitely antagonistic—and the fourth partner, the teacher, like the Youth Leader, will find himself dealing not with boys and girls, but young adults whose whole outlook on life may have changed since their entry into employment, and whose attitude towards this part-time education will be profoundly influenced by the attitude of their parents, their employers and their friends. Some young people from the more enlightened firms will receive friendly co-operation and help, but who can foretell what varieties of inconvenience may not be suffered by the young

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE HANDS

students where this co-operation is not found? They may have to cope with friendly and not so friendly gibes (and it is harder to laugh at yourself in adolescence, especially at some assault on your new-found adulthood, than at any other stage of growth); they may have to bear patronising toleration and sometimes petty, and occasionally even hostile, obstruction. Educationists assume that the time spent in the County College will always be more beneficial than the time spent at work, but the young people, the parents and the employers for the most part are still to be convinced, or perhaps a better word would be 'converted'.

The Education Act of 1944 will affect the employment and training of young people in yet another way. The raising of the school leaving age to 15 years, and to 16 at a later period, and the requirement that young people between 15 and 18 years shall attend day-time instruction on two half-days per week, will *reduce* the amount of available juvenile labour in the following rather startling fashion. The raising of the school leaving age to 15 years will mean a 25 per cent reduction; the introduction of day-time instruction with the school leaving age still 15 years, will mean a 40 per cent reduction (based on a five-day week); and finally, the raising of the leaving age to 16 years, and day-time instruction of those between 16 and 18 years, will mean a reduction of 60 per cent (based on a five-day week).

Another largely unforeseen consequence, following upon the withdrawal of a large number of young workers from industry and trade, will be a possible reorganisation within the ranks of the employers, which may have far-reaching effects. When the Shops Act, which reduced the working hours of those under 16 to forty-four hours per week, came into operation, a comparatively large number of retailers decided not to employ juveniles under 16. It is probable, therefore, that when juveniles are required to attend for day instruction, a number of employers will cease to employ such juveniles. But in all probability this reduction in demand will not compensate for the reduction in supply, though it may be the solution to another problem, the married women who would like some part-time employment. Still, all this may not be entirely a matter for gloom. After all,

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE HANDS

at no other point in the history of labour has a shortage of labour proved an unfavourable basis for bargaining with the employer.

A shortage of juvenile labour will, indeed, produce keen competition among employers for the services of the reduced number of young people, and this competition may result in the most unskilled types of employment, from the point of view of training, becoming the most remunerative. In some ways this would seem a welcome change, since the dull job would have the compensation of the high wage, but the high wage has been the root cause in ruining a large percentage of the careers of our most promising boys and girls in the past—particularly in the war years—not only from the industrial point of view, but morally and socially as well.

There are some notable Trade Unionists who believe that high wages will not be the bait offered—that the folly of this has been well and truly realised. Such people believe that the various unskilled trades will compete in the future not in the field of wages, but in the field of welfare, including education. It is, indeed, alarming to discover that already firms, which declared that their work was unskilled when it was a question of wages, are now suggesting that it demands a certain low grade skill which necessitates their setting up their own training schemes. It is equally alarming to pursue the question of hours too far, since there comes a point at which it is better for young people to be less hard pressed for slightly longer hours rather than to be driven for shorter hours, however ideal those shorter hours may look on paper. This will bring to a head a very real question which we must all face and that is, when does welfare supervision—the provision of canteens, crèches, playing fields, sports clubs, medical attention and education—reduce the unskilled worker to the status of a well cared for, almost pampered, slave under a benevolent despot who controls the major portion of his life, rather than maintain for him the status of a free and independent worker?

Bearing all these things in mind, one of the most helpful methods of approach to informal education is through interesting people first of all in their own jobs, and then in other

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE HANDS

people's. Many a youth centre has held a series of most lively and informative talks under the title, albeit somewhat ungrammatical, of 'Me and My Job'. All sorts of people who might never be articulate on any other subject can be most interesting in giving an account of a day in their working life: the bus conductor, the hairdresser, the policeman, the Matron in the hospital and the newly joined probationer, all have an interesting tale to tell. A great deal of the popularity of the Young Farmers' Clubs is probably due to the fact that the young farmers come together and discuss not only the rural problems of leisure time, but their vocational problems too. As one youth officer said about Young Farmers' Clubs: 'In my area if I had talked about making better citizens I might have been regarded as a vague theorist, but to talk about making better farmers seemed both understandable and practical.' These Young Farmers' Clubs have a threefold aim, to increase the scientific knowledge and practice of agriculture, to widen their members' general education, and to stimulate a reverence for life in all its manifestations. The young people indulge in practical demonstrations of stock judging, ploughing, sheep shearing, hedging, and they make visits of inspection to well-run farms, and hold classes on such subjects as farming accounts. One wonders whether Young Mechanics' or Young Artisans' Clubs might not fulfil an equally realistic function. It would be more difficult, since the jobs are more varied, but the 'Me and My Job' technique could be used in that connection too. There seems no reason why there could not be Young Grocers' Clubs, Young Hairdressers' Associations, Young Distributive Workers' Clubs and so on. Just as in the Young Farmers' Clubs, these societies could encourage people to see that the work of their hands is of vital interest through learning the work of others and through the interchange of experience.

Programmes of films and talks could be built up which, while making some point of departure from their own particular job, would take the young people beyond the bounds of their own daily experience. For instance, to quote the experience of a Young Farmers' Club again, many young agriculturists had a special showing of the film *Bergen and Dramen*, which



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE HANDS

shows the development of two important Norwegian communities from poor agricultural hinterlands, and which also gave an insight into the life and occupations of an allied nation. 'I wonder why they do it like that?' is as good a way of broadening the mind and of interesting both oneself and others in one's daily work as any other. In one area alone speakers which these groups listened to during one winter were a negro lecturer from the Gold Coast, a Dane in another village, a Chinese graduate from Shanghai and a Russian who had been brought up on a collective farm, while a most interesting Czech met a group in a large farm kitchen. During one winter 80 meetings of this kind were held in one county, and all the travelling expenses and hospitality were found by the young people themselves.

One cannot fail, if one is considering actual work, to discuss the conditions prevailing in various jobs; and here again it is both salutary and necessary that people shall give due consideration to what they can do for themselves, as well as to what 'they' ought to do about it. For instance, one of the little advertised difficulties met with on entry into employment is the tradition of 'trying out' the new hand, just as there is, of course, the tradition in many a school of ragging the new boy. These 'initiation ceremonies' may vary from sending the victim round the shops on a stupid errand, to crude physical displays or horseplay, and on rarer occasions to horseplay of extreme vulgarity and even of some sexual significance. In their milder form such things are little more than stupid, and it would be a great mistake to pretend that all young people entering into work for the first time are up against soul-searing experiences. Nevertheless, these 'initiation ceremonies' can be a great shock to those who have not been forewarned or who are unduly sensitive. The introduction of welfare officers has done much to stamp out the cruder rites, but these still persist sometimes behind their backs. On the whole, as far as one can obtain data on such a subject, it would seem that the cruder manifestations of this type of thing are now dying a lingering death, though they are still too prevalent in some of the older industries. They also seem to be slow to disappear in those jobs which are by their very nature unattractive and may therefore

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE HANDS

recruit a rather tough type with more brawn than brain. Many parents when pressed about their reluctance to allow their young people to enter certain jobs make unwilling reference to this sort of thing.

These tales come from all over the country, and therefore cannot be light-heartedly dismissed, and it is a confirmation of one's general, but reluctant, conclusions on the matter to find that in nearly any large and representative group of young people gathered together for discussions on working conditions very few state that they have had no trouble of this kind on entering work. The trouble varies from 'new boy' tricks, for example silly errands like sending them all over the works to look for a glass-headed hammer, to interfering with tools, which may frighten the over-anxious or get them into trouble, or cause loss of wages; from crude jokes such as filling their caps with oil or nailing their coats to the bench, or heavy horse-play such as turning the hose on them or holding them face downwards in a barrel of water, to taking off a boy's trousers or removing a girl's underwear and making her climb onto an overhanging pipe where the garment has been thrown, or the crudest methods of stripping boys and in extreme cases painting their genitals. It may also take the form of mobbing or cornering and the enforced repetition of a 'say after me' type of vulgarity, or the repeating of vulgar gestures and obscenities. All these experiences may be undergone in small concerns as well as large.

It would be interesting to know whether the very large number of applications for transfer under the Essential Works Order which were made on the young people's complaint that they were unable to stand the 'bad language' concealed a certain number of cases of this kind, since often when young people complain about bad language it is bad behaviour and obscene gestures which have worried them. Young people who have experienced treatment of this kind on entering work agree that these tricks are general, and that in the majority of cases they are meant as a joke. They agree that as a rule it is perfectly all right 'if you take it well'. They agree that some of it is really malicious and spiteful, but nearly always fall back on the general excuse and apology that it is the custom, that it is

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE HANDS

a way of breaking people in, that people don't realise what they are doing, and that very often it is 'a way the other workers have of getting rid of their spleen'. They say that it is always worse in places where people bear a grudge against a particular foreman or against 'the bosses' themselves, and that they think it 'helps the older workers to take it out of the new ones'. Moreover, there is very often a real jealousy of the newcomer, especially if he is bright, or conscientious, or better educated than the others. Most young people seem to agree that the foreman or the boss probably knows about this, but that he shuts his eyes to it; that the bosses, particularly in the newer firms, 'don't hold with it', but that it is very difficult to check since whatever happens no-one must ever 'squeal' for 'you are finished if you do'. All the young people it has been possible to question over this seemed to be much more resentful of the fact that they were not warned about it, than about the actual experience itself. But the devastating thing was that most of them maintained that, as it was the custom, they in their turn would probably do the same to others, since you could hardly help yourself! They excused themselves rather sheepishly by maintaining that it shows what you are made of, and teaches you to stand on your own feet, but all agreed that it hurt terribly at the time.<sup>1</sup>

It would seem, therefore, that the eradication of these customs is a matter of education, and that their total elimination is bound to be very gradual. Nevertheless, teachers, parents and foremen alike could do much to help young people to be prepared for these things without unduly alarming them, so that they would regard such tricks not as tragedies but as something which, even though unpleasant, teaches them to stand on their own feet. Above all, they might be shown that it is something which they in their turn can try to set their faces against, so that they and their children will not hand it down to coming generations with the fatuous excuse, 'We had to go through it'.

Both the question of making life easier for the young entrant into employment and the question of general honesty within

<sup>1</sup>This was admirably dealt with in the broadcast, 'It Got Me Down'.

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE HANDS

the office, factory or farm, are matters which can only really be tackled by the workers themselves. Many young people complain that they are not able to stand out against the general slackness both with regard to work and behaviour, because of the attitude of their workmates. Instilling a respect for communal property is made difficult in many places of employment because it is not easy to avoid helping yourself to certain articles left lying about, pieces of scrap, office notepaper, or whatever it may be, without appearing a fool. These are conditions which the workers themselves must tackle, but they can well be approached first through the informal education of leisure hours. Many a group, for instance, which had formed a radio listening circle, was shocked on hearing the 'Scrounging and Stealing' broadcast to realise that in the eyes of John Watson, the guest expert, they had all, at one time or another, been thieves! Again, many people, young and old, are constantly agitating for various reforms of working conditions, without having any knowledge of the various Acts already passed concerning these conditions. They waste their time and their breath, and the time of many officials, agitating for reforms which are already on the Statute Book. The very date of the Factory Act—1937—two years before the outbreak of the last war, is in itself a reason why many of the reforms envisaged have not yet been carried out. One of the major difficulties about the Employment of Young Persons Act and the Shop Acts is that they are administered by the Local Authorities, and in some cases by the Inspector of Weights and Measures, the Tramways Department or some similar branch which quite naturally cannot regard them as their major concern.

What most people need to do is to agitate not for reforms, but for the adequate execution of reforms.

Many a group has gained a new respect for their work and reforming zeal generally by discussing the Factory Act and all that led up to it, and in the same way many a Young Farmers' Group in reading extracts from White Papers relating to agriculture have been able to view their own work with due regard to the local and national conditions. However, it is not only conditions that are important; because people still have a

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE HANDS

pride in their craft it is well that they should know as much as possible about all local industries and local trades.

One may talk about education for leisure until one is black in the face, but the first essential is to give people an interest and pride in their job and a good conceit of its place and value in the community. Training for leisure does not and cannot make dull work more interesting. One must train people to see the interest in the work they are doing first, and one can then give them a further compensatory interest for their leisure time. A great deal of the time given to craft work in leisure hours could be devoted to some attempts to make the work of the neighbourhood seem interesting and vital in the eyes of those people who are engaged in it.

From a consideration of one's job and its geographical situation there are an endless variety of new interests which can be explored. All young people want to know how things work, from the radio to the mind, but how things are made can be quite as interesting. All those common, everyday things which we take so much for granted, like soap, beer and glue, have a most fascinating story connected with their manufacture, and 'how it is made', 'how it works' and 'who first thought of it' can provide an excellent approach to various informal studies of elementary science. After all, who first thought of cooking? Lamb has one theory in his essay on Roast Pig, but what of all the various other ways of cooking? Who first thought of the turnspit, the gas stove and the regulo? Who first thought of refrigerators? Francis Bacon makes a stout claim, and in any case it is a very good story. Who first thought of antiseptics? Who first thought of radium?

We talk a great deal about science at the moment, but agriculture was the first science and that led to astronomy and that led to mathematics; and it is interesting to see where religion fits into that scientific scheme, into both practical and applied science, as it were. One can talk about science and man, science in industry and the home, science and leisure, science and war, one can talk about scientific laws from astronomical laws to the law of gravity, from mathematical concepts to the atomic theory, and all this can begin from a talk about a chap whose job it is to know something about the stars.



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE HANDS

One group that had had the advantage of a talk from someone who did meteorological work in the Forces found itself embarking on a whole course of talks on the scientific method. 'Tell us,' they said, 'where does the philosopher fit into all this?' And they were fascinated to discover that the Greeks, like some of the moderns, first looked for truth in the physical universe, and tried to find it in the water, in the air and in numbers. They were fascinated by a simple talk on those philosophers who maintained that reality is change, and those who maintained that it is one. There is no reason why it should be only undergraduates who have the fun of trying to argue the old propositions of Zeno about the formation of a line, whereby you can prove that there is no such thing as space, about the flying arrow and about Achilles and the tortoise, by which you can prove that there is no such thing as time—all absurdities, but so difficult to refute that the disciples of Bergson and Einstein are still at it. Such discussions inevitably lead to talks about Socrates, who turned from physical philosophy to mental gymnastics, and who insisted that ideas were reality. He was a mean-looking man and had a nagging wife, and stupid children, and yet he gave us his theory of ideas and the conception that all these ideas have unity in the idea of the Good. It is not necessary to have a secondary education to follow and enjoy the allegory of the cave. Indeed, it is probably a lot easier for people who are cinema goers to understand it than for many of those unfortunate eighteenth century philosophers who could not, poor things, ever go to the cinema!

People are constantly complaining that this modern age has lost its sense of wonder, but what are the seven modern wonders of the world? Many a group has had a most interesting series of talks, first in deciding what they are and then in trying to find out, with the aid of an expert, more about them.

Yet another method of approach is that of discussing the laws and customs relating to jobs—a thing that might well spring from a 'Me and My Job' series—or the customs governing entry into some forms of employment. A very simple little story told in a 'by the way' fashion, about a custom still retained among the brass founders in Birmingham, immediately

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE HANDS

set up a whole train of 'that reminds me'. There, on the day when a boy passes out of his apprenticeship, they hold a formal ceremony of welcoming him into the ranks of skilled workers. It is not only the rather tough and harsh side of the older industries which is revealed if one studies them more closely. There are a whole series of laws and customs relating to mining, and a whole series relating to cotton, both weaving and spinning. To this day, for instance, if there is a fatal accident in a mine the whole of the shift leaves off work for the day as a mark of respect to the deceased man. To this day the work on many a weaver's beam is kept in the hands of one family, and therefore you can go from beam to beam finding on one two sisters and two cousins, or a man and his sister and two of his children, and so on. As a rule they would rather that the whole beam should remain idle for a day than that they should break their luck and share their own particular skill with a stranger. Customs are inevitably linked with laws, and with all the laws relating to employment, not only the factory laws, but little oddments like the Truck Act; questions like the legalisation of strikes are fascinating in themselves, and help to make one's daily work more interesting and more romantic in the William Morris sense of that word.

Once one embarks on laws and customs one opens up an entirely new field in which the workers, whether old or young, will love to roam, the field of law itself. Almost any lecturer can get a crowded audience for a talk on juvenile delinquency, or any aspect of crime. Crime in this sense always interests even if it does not pay.

However, it is not the rather too keen interest in such matters as juvenile delinquency or the latest murder that one wishes to stress, but some other fascinating highways and byways of the law. A wildly excited conversation about whether the woman, in what has come to be known as the Cleft Chin murder case, should be reprieved, caused one group of people to embark on an interesting course of talks on the treatment of criminals through the ages, and this led quite naturally to a study of penal reform. This is particularly important for a large number of reasons. For the average citizen, as no less an authority than

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE HANDS

Lord Asquith said in 1925, the idea that punishment should be merely reformatory is too purely utilitarian. Yet any further reform in the treatment of criminals must be in the direction of studying not the offence but the offender. A beginning of course has been made through the Children and Young Persons Act, but we can go very little further until the majority of people are in a situation when they can hate the sin without hating the sinner.

Every prison reform has always been greeted with hysterical outcries that the prisoner must not be made too comfortable. The law of lesser eligibility has been unfailingly applied, which means that the prisoner must never have *more* in the way of diet, comfort or wages than the *least* well-off and *least* well-paid member of society outside the prison walls. Every effort to encourage young people as well as adults to learn a trade while in prison, so that they shall be able to take their place as self-respecting wage-earners in the community afterwards, has always been difficult because of the fear that such training would enable the law-breaker to compete eventually with the good citizen outside who has not broken the law or the good citizen who may not have been able to get such training. This is one of the main reasons why Approved Schools and Borstal institutions, as well as prisons, are limited to training offenders for such a small variety of trades. Apparently, it is assumed by the outside world that every person who commits an offence is obviously fitted to be an agricultural labourer, sailor, boot-repairer, laundry girl or domestic servant. If this were not enough, many of the public then round upon the Approved Schools for teaching only these things. But it is for the public to understand that violence is the child of violence and that useless segregation from society can never produce a state of mind in which people are prepared to go back into society to be useful. Useless punishment, in fact, increases the antisocial attitude which led to the offence in the first place, and furthermore such a method of treatment, by making the criminal's reformation more difficult, in the last resort injures society itself.

The fascinating story of the International Prison Commission, set up in 1878, shows a long and dismal record of

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE HANDS

opposition not only from political and legal sources, but from social and economic organisations and even religious bodies. The time has surely come when the education of good citizens is so important, when we can so little afford the wastage of any of our manpower, that the State's treatment of social misfits must make it possible for them to re-enter society prepared to pull their weight. The more we know what determines human behaviour, the more we shall have freedom from want and from fear, but unfortunately most people find it much more attractive to think of mastering their surroundings than to think of mastering themselves.

In Plato's time it was enough to approach the problem of right and wrong, the problem of justice, in the abstract; but in a rapidly changing world we have to realise that human nature itself can, and does change, and we shall have to learn to relate moral questions to the problems of a changing society. We all know that there is a distinction between right and wrong, but even this, if we look at the thing in perspective, has changed from age to age. Luther in his day was regarded as very wrong, by large numbers of undoubtedly good and influential people; and just as we are ready to revise our former views on the big people we must be ready to revise our former views on the little people. If we do not do this we become afraid of new situations, we become confused and are quick to take a defensive attitude, and that is the beginning of the path that leads to dictatorship, fear and lack of understanding. Totalitarianism is the answer of the man who doesn't understand what is happening, and therefore is afraid. It was this fear which delayed Sir Samuel Hoare's penal reform measure so that it was prevented from reaching the Statute Book in 1939. Much of the delay was due, to their eternal shame, to numbers of women's organisations who feared what seemed to them the dangerous proposal of abolishing 'the cat' for various crimes of violence. A study of various methods of treatment of prisoners and discussions on the general principles and purposes of penal reform might do a great deal to prevent agitation of a similar kind delaying such a measure of reform yet again.

Indeed one can think of no better way of studying citizenship



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE HANDS

than through the law. Large numbers of people are uninterested in a great deal of detail about the machinery of parliamentary or local government. As long as they know how the thing works in broad principles that is all that matters, but all our citizenship and all our freedom is within the law, and it is most important that enough people shall be aware of the supreme importance of that essential first principle of freedom, that no-one in any government or society shall be above the law. In the history of every dictatorship it is found that one of the earliest stages is that of tampering with freedom of man within the law and tampering with the administration of that law.

Another introduction to a study of the law may be found through discussions, again using the interview technique, of the duties of a policeman, and the duties of an ordinary citizen towards the police. How many people know, for instance, that it is their duty to go to the help of the police in certain circumstances? Again, the whole question of the duties of magistrates and the help which they, as ordinary citizens, can give to other ordinary citizens may be a useful approach to this subject. Apart from the fact that the 'law is an ass' and the frequent silly remark: 'Why shouldn't I do it? There's no law against it', people talk of police courts when there are no such things and indeed most people's attitude to the law is rather like that of the old lady who said: 'If I can't get my rights by fair means I'll go to law, but I'd never go to law if I could help it.'

In a country where the two fundamental legal principles are that ignorance of the law excuses no-one, and that law and order is preserved not by a series of written 'Thou shalt not's' but built up through case law, it is indeed extraordinary that the ignorance of the public should be so great. The whole question of case law can be built round a talk called 'There is no law against it'. One of the essential differences between Roman Law and English Law is that Roman Law exalted the State over the individual, whereas English Law exalts the individual over the State. And therein lies a great deal of the explanation of the difference between our attitude towards life and the attitude of those European States whose



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE HANDS

law derives directly from the Roman tradition. Another fascinating beginning for a set of talks about the law is the perfectly truthful statement that anyone in this country can say to his judges: 'All right. Prove it!' This presumption of innocence, the fact that in England you are assumed innocent until you are proved guilty, is yet another way in which our attitude of mind differs from the Continental one. All this goes so far, that it affects even the rules of arrest, and indeed in some cases very much hampers the police. It goes so far that one is seldom allowed to plead 'Guilty' of murder, and one cannot even be convicted on one's own confession unless the prosecution can prove that the confession was free and voluntary. All this can arise in discussions out of the laws relating to working conditions.

People are always complaining that English law is expensive, but it is essential that judges shall be well paid and how far this affects the individual citizen's safety is a point well worth considering. Again, the citizen's freedom within the law could be another way of introducing people to the fascinating story of our legal system. No-one is asking that people should become so interested in law that we should become a litigious nation like some of the Scandinavian countries, but there are disquieting signs abroad that make one very anxious that the ordinary citizen shall become interested not only in penal reform, not only in the burning question of the codification of our law which has become increasingly necessary, but in his manifest duty to see that his freedom within the law shall in no way be diminished.

One is apt to assume that law is difficult. It is certainly true that in a case of difficulty most people are very unwise not to seek expert legal advice, but the lawyers after all are interpreting *our* law for *us*, and if it is to remain true that to the English justice is never trivial, it is important that everyone should know how that justice is operated. The very fact that under the law all men are equal brings up the whole question of legal advice and it was amusing to notice that even an arch-traitor like William Joyce, the erstwhile Lord Haw-haw, had and exercised the right to ask one of our fore-

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE HANDS

most K.C.s to undertake his defence. Indeed the newspapers day after day present excellent opportunities of encouraging people to be interested in all the principles underlying the law. It is not true to say that with a little encouragement people cannot be interested in this sort of thing, or that they find it difficult. English law is guided by the English sense of fair play, a sense which has become more well defined owing to contributions made to it by Alfred the Great, the traditions of the prize ring and the turf and the national game of cricket.

Another very interesting way to tackle this problem of education concerning the law is through the laws which affect every worker and employer, the law which affects the worker in the matter of hire purchase, rent acts and insurance, and the fascinating story of public assistance, where that great maxim operates that no man, no matter how shocking his way of life, may be denied the right to assistance for his ordinary day to day needs. We have spent rather too long, possibly, in our citizenship education in considering what every citizen ought to *know*, and it would be no bad thing through a study of the law to consider, possibly first, but at least afterwards, what every citizen ought to *do*, since any study of citizenship, if it is to be real, must be both progressive and practical. Whether our study is a study of the penal code or of local government, it is as well that we should all understand that neither is the result of somebody's brainwave. Like Topsy, they have 'grewed', and in their growing both have had to try to keep pace with the demands of the people. Just as we get the Government we deserve, so we get the law we deserve. The seeds of law and order are to be found in man himself.

How great the interest can be has been clearly demonstrated by the popularity of Jennifer Wayne's broadcasts, 'This is the Law'. One could only regret the fact that possibly few groups who listened to these broadcasts have considered ways in which they might extend their knowledge of other aspects of the law.

Some of the best biographies ever written are those of actors and lawyers, and that again is a way of introducing

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE HANDS

various aspects of the law. Furthermore it is no bad thing that people should sometimes stop to consider the rule of law as it affects agriculture, architecture and all our working life, while all the sciences on the one hand, and the law of the universe on the other, are inevitably bound up with the law of right and wrong.

A group which had been considering various aspects of social justice found teachers interested in legal justice and from that undertook some discussion on 'The Philosophers'. Yet another group in a different part of the country, starting from a study of the weather and the stars, found themselves tied up in the whole question of right and wrong, the whole question indeed of Ethics. It is not only Sixth Formers who are interested in subjects of this kind. One of the most enlightened directors of an Approved School in this country always maintains that, before he can do anything with the boys under his charge, he has to break down their feeling of injustice at having been sent there in the first place. He maintains that nine out of ten young people arrive with 'It isn't fair!' on their lips. Once he has proved to them that it *is* fair, they are then in a state to go further with him, and he too engages in a fascinating series of talks on Ethics with all the mixed bag of boys that pass through his hands from time to time. According to the capacity of the group with which one is dealing, one can formulate an extraordinarily interesting and progressive series of discussions on Aristotle's *Ethics*, Books I and X, using the question and answer method only, which can cause people to find their own way to that conclusion to which Aristotle himself came, that happiness is an excellent *work* of body and of mind, and *work* for most of us means work with the hands.

However, it would be unwise not to give some attention to the work of the hands which is done in leisure time. There again, possibly one of the most fruitful methods of approach is not to consider what would be an easy or useful thing to make, but what craft we can offer to people which shall give them some sense of achievement. We all like to be able to do something, and to do it well, so which crafts are those

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE HANDS

which will give us a definite sense of power over the material? For the urge to power is one of the strongest human urges. It is necessary, of course, that it should be so, since it is the life urge itself, and without the urge to power the baby would never conquer those almost insuperable obstacles and hazards which lie before it in learning to walk.

It seems unfortunate that a great deal more work is not done with clay, plaster of Paris, chalk and salt, pottery, all forms of carving and sculpture and weaving. Clay is to the older person what sand and water are to the small child. It is common knowledge that many of the difficulties of maladjusted children are due to the fact that they did not have, or were not allowed to play with, water or sand at the right age, that they have never had the fun of splashing paint about. All these things give people the comfort of building up, of bending something to their own ideas, and also help them to achieve a certain amount of discipline through the limitations of whatever materials they use.

One of the reasons why weaving is so satisfactory in mental therapy is because in weaving you can find your own pace, and you get, in supreme measure, this comfort of building up.

In chalk carving, salt carving or wood carving, you get the reverse. You get the relief of breaking down. How many people have not said from time to time: 'I'd like to smash something!' And how right they are! It would probably do them all the good in the world to do so. Unfortunately, however, most smashing is regarded as antisocial, and there are few who are sufficiently far-sighted to keep a supply of unwanted things at hand to smash when they feel like it; but many people can work this particular devil out of them through a craft which legalises the impulse and which encourages them not to be afraid. One of the most pathetic things in life is the number of people who never do or make anything because they are afraid to make mistakes. Although other crafts are important, and no-one would wish to underestimate their value, those things which help us to feel a sense of power and encourage us, if we are to make a mistake, to make it boldly, have a very high priority. Possibly

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE HANDS

one of the most satisfying parts of cookery is that of bread making, because it satisfies so many of one's childish desires. One can play with flour and water, one can have the terrific relief of slapping the dough about, and eventually one's power over the material asserts itself—one has built up a loaf of bread.

Gardening is another very satisfying craft. Here again these same impulses are satisfied: our power over the material, soil, our smashing down of weeds, and our planning and building of a garden, in which, but for us, nothing would have grown. Gardening, of course, takes one a stage further, since it is an essentially co-operative activity. Probably one of the most important lines of progress in educational work has been that of providing gardens which young people themselves can look after. One could wish that every youth centre, every community centre and indeed every club where people are gathered together for informal education could have its own plot of ground. I remember so well the sense of satisfaction and self-respect which was achieved by a group of boys on a slum clearance housing estate, who after about three years were encouraged to dig up the waste ground round their club hut. They then planted potatoes, which perform that curious process known to gardeners as 'cleaning the ground'. No potatoes ever received more tender care, and when the time came for them to be dug up it was revealing to notice how their sense of pride in the work of their hands was only exceeded by the glow of satisfaction which they obtained from sharing out the produce fairly among those who had done the work. Before this, however, they had set aside a tenth, one sackful of which was given to a local hospital and another to one or two old people on the estate. These boys had never had anything to give away before, and it was not an idle phrase to say that the joy of giving increased their stature morally as pride in giving increased their stature physically.

All work among living things has its importance. The keeping of rabbits, the formation of pig clubs and all such activities which involve certain essential operations in connection with keeping the animals clean, building their hutches



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE HANDS

and the rest of it, followed by the sharing out of the produce, bring both satisfaction in a craft well done and also the preservation or even restoration of mental health.

Another most important way of causing the work of the hands to minister to one's mental well-being comes through considering what possibilities there are of conquering the surroundings in which one meets. No-one could regret more than I do the poverty and paucity of the equipment of so many club rooms and classrooms, but some of the healthiest clubs have certainly been built up by groups of people who have beautified them by the work of their own hands. I can call to mind the happiness of a W.E.A. club which, on moving into new premises, at last saw how sordid their surroundings had been for about ten years, and abandoned, with probably no lack of educational progress, about three of their discussion Saturday afternoons in order to take part in 'music while you scrub' sessions. Encouraged by a portable radio, they scrubbed, distempered and painted not only the floors and walls, but all the furniture which they had moved into their new room.

I remember also a club in Northern Ireland, which had been bombed out of one set of premises in Belfast and which, after many and curious adventures, found itself in a rather ordinary, rather ugly, and extremely uncomfortable house. Labour was impossible to obtain, and materials only a little less difficult, but on the occasion on which I visited the club distempering was going on in one room, while in another room people were performing an operation known as 'stippling' (which seemed to consist of the delightfully satisfactory action of dabbing walls with a red-inked sponge as people distempered it). Another room was being scrubbed, and in yet another room black-out curtains were being ornamented with red and blue braid (not to mention the inevitable green) and were being further decorated by stars and crescents and most of the signs of the zodiac. Then, because it was Ireland and because I was a visitor, I was rushed past a staircase on which people were painting a chest of drawers and a set of bookshelves a true Irish green, through a room in which people were sorting out posters for the decorating of the

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE HANDS

staircase, into the biggest room of all. There one by one crept the red-ink spongers, the people who were distempering, the painters, and the curtain makers (with some of the curtains draped round them like cloaks) and they proceeded to entertain themselves and me with a series of Irish dances in a room much too small for the purpose, accompanied by the piano alone until the accompanist was joined by an honest to goodness Irish fiddler and a boy who played a beautiful inlaid concertina which had almost a hundred and fifty years of history behind it. It was a romantic place, in that plenty was going on. There was not a class or a series of classes, but people were exercising their urge to power in subduing the ugliness of a sordid meeting place, they were both educating themselves and enjoying themselves, which is far more often the same thing than many of the earnest are willing to concede.

There is too much craft work which is inclined to be of an individual and solitary kind, and that is why the care of the premises in which one meets and the decoration of those premises—the making of shelves, tables, and stools, curtains and cushions—has a value far above the production of the articles themselves, the value of teaching people to work together, leading where they are able to lead and following where they have not the skill to do more.

One of the most educative sides of drama work is the co-operation that goes on in the making of the scenery, the screens and those fireplaces which one seems to need for nearly every one-act play in the English language. A group of young people who had an extremely flourishing drama group in a most inconvenient old hall with no stage at all (merely a set of curtains at one end of the room) evolved a whole set of stage equipment and flats, all of which had a dual purpose. When you hooked a flat to the wall one way, behold a fireplace, and when you hooked it onto the wall another way, a casement window; another placed at one angle towards the audience formed a most convenient chest of drawers, and at a different angle a writing desk, and so on and so forth. The Club's pride in the skill of the young

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE HANDS

people who had done this work was just as great as their pride in those who had made the Club's name known throughout the town as an amateur dramatic society of considerable talent.

This business of seeing that the surroundings are the work of one's own hands is a very real help in all those difficulties about 'manners' and in the very real difficulty there is in teaching people to care for communal property as they care for their own. A club, which had been persuaded to take in a rather too high proportion of delinquent boys, found that they were busily engaged in wrecking the premises. A lock-up shop was therefore rented, which had been vacant for many years and which adjoined the club premises. This was put at the disposal of those who would persist in wrecking things. They complained bitterly that it was a 'mucky 'ole' and were rather taken aback when this point was agreed; they were even more taken aback when it was suggested that if they wanted to make it less 'mucky' they could do it themselves, though buckets, brushes and distemper would be provided by the management. However, the idea of throwing water and distemper about rather pleased them, and having first scraped the walls, which provided a history of almost fifty years of fashion in wallpaper, they then, under a certain amount of direction, proceeded to whiten the ceilings and distemper the walls. Meanwhile, a certain number of old, extremely solid and shabby tables and chairs had been bought from a variety of junk shops in the neighbourhood, and when the distemping was finished it was suggested that they should mend and paint the furniture. This was greeted with much more enthusiasm by a group which had now discovered that co-operative effort is as much fun if it is used to create as if it is used to destroy. One of the mothers who at first meeting might have been thought most unlikely to co-operate, was roped in to machine curtains, and eventually after about six or eight weeks of terrific labour the premises were by no means a 'mucky 'ole'.

It was then suggested that they might like to have a grand house-warming and invite various people from the main club to attend. This was done, and a memorable moment came

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE HANDS

during the course of the evening when one of the boys who had been most destructive in the main club caught one of the visitors patiently making a lead pencil groove in one of the carefully painted tables. 'Ere,' he said, 'what do you think you're doing? Making a mess of other people's furniture. Don't you know it's taken time and money to get this place looking like this? If you can't behave yourself you'd better get out!' And that is the end of the tale. The boys had found themselves, and found a new self-respect through the work of their hands. One knows that this is a story about a tough type of boy, but it is also true that many bored and restless groups, many young people who have never had to think about distempering and furnishing and general spring cleaning, find equal joy and fellowship through making a place of their own clean, beautiful and comfortable.

Much could be said about the importance of the discipline which one's material imposes upon one. There are only certain things which one can do with wood, with clay and with paint. And the discipline which a material imposes is often the way for some people to learn control of themselves. A great deal of work of this type has its importance too in the fact that it allows everybody to find their own pace. It is one of the values of weaving particularly, and certainly one of the values of working with clay and wood. There are possibly few things more unbearable than the sheer frustration of having to work too quickly because one's needs must keep pace with the rest of the class or group, or (what is perhaps less generally realised) more frustrating than to have to work too slowly; and anything which allows people to co-operate and yet work at their own pace is very valuable and satisfactory.

It is important that in all consideration of the work of the hands we should remember that a craft to be satisfactory must not be a blind-alley craft. It must have a value, a quality of its own. It must set an invisible standard of achievement, and if it has this factor within it one can then get on with the learning of the basis of one's skill without talking about standards too much.



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE HANDS

Everyone really needs to have access to a workshop of some kind or another. In all our educational endeavour, it is unwise to forget that everyone at some time or another likes to get away and concern himself with his own ploys. A boy likes to have a stab at mending things, a girl likes to have a place where she can machine up the sides of the frock or underwear she is trying to make, and a workshop where people can go at will has enormous advantages. We probably do not realise to the full the value of the shed at the bottom of the garden where boys can spend hours taking things to pieces and putting them together again, or even not putting them together again! Every club, every youth centre or what-may-be catering for young people certainly needs a workshop, not so much for formal classes, however useful those are, but for people to use to do a job or to watch someone else doing a job. There is an unfailing fascination in watching other people work, as is evidenced every day of the week when one sees the crowds that gather to see workmen taking a road up or putting one down again (particularly if it is the sort of operation which demands a tent of some sort and a hole into which a man may disappear). Moreover, there is nothing like being among things being done to encourage one to do something for oneself; nothing, indeed, like watching someone else fumbling at a job to make one feel an urge to push them aside and do it better! How many people can stand calmly aside and watch someone undoing the string on a parcel without saying at least once during the operation 'Let me have a try!'

It does not matter whether people are doing exactly the same thing or not, what matters is that they shall be doing it as a community. We talk a great deal about the advantages of boys and girls learning to mix with one another, and we search feverishly for things that they can do together, and if they don't seem anxious to co-operate we always seem to imagine that we have got hold of the wrong activity. Nine times out of ten the truth is that they are so unaccustomed to doing anything together that *any* activity would really be all right if it were imaginatively handled. We talk a great deal about preparation for marriage, sex education and so



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE HANDS

on, but the truth of the matter is that no relationship between men and women can be taught, it has to be experienced. Unless boys are to regard girls, as one scathing club leader put it, 'merely as a mixed activity' they must *do* things together, and the same thing is true of girls. Friendships of all kinds assume greater importance in adolescence than ever before, and it is the joy of doing things together which creates the possibility of decent and sensible friendships. What the majority of young people need is not so much biological and physiological instruction, which they have often had, for good or ill, long before, but instruction and practice in getting on with one another.

It is perhaps true to say that they need a certain amount of guidance on those very qualities which ensure that friendship will last. The whole question of give and take, and the supremely important question of loyalty, may best be learned through co-operation over an actual job with one another. Loyalty and respect towards the job itself, and towards the people we are doing it with, are something which cannot be learned too early, and they are the foundation on which any decent and orderly society must be built. The very fact that people have such limited ideas concerning loyalties is the reason why there is such little evidence of social responsibility in certain sections of the population. In matters of sex education particularly, and in matters of the relationship between boys and girls, men and women, we have perhaps dealt too exclusively in the past with the awful results that will follow if things go wrong, whereas what people really want to know is how they can make them go right.

All those external conditions such as housing, education, economic conditions, affect our personal relationships, and the one cannot really be righted without endeavouring to right the other as well. If people are to find themselves in really harmonious partnership, they must practise this art of getting on with one another before they are really ready to start putting the rest of the world to rights.

It is perfectly true that bad social conditions can destroy what is sound in people, but the opposite is true as well.

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE HANDS

Sound social conditions demand that people shall be sound enough to use and enjoy them properly. There is no such thing as responsibility in the abstract. It is by acting their part over and over again that people become what they finally are. It is no good focussing one's attention on the individual alone, one has to remember the effects on his character of both his occupation and his group. The group, particularly, educates people, not so much by lectures or even by personal appeal, but by expecting them to act in a certain way and by giving them a job to do. We talk very grandly about the influence of family life, but in actual fact what we really mean is that living in a small group involves certain virtues, such as mutual help, loyalty and courage. If men are going to live together peacefully and constructively they must work together. The need for co-operation is so strong that even gangsters will acknowledge it. But the trouble is how to translate the loyalty in the small group into the wider loyalty of life as a whole. Perhaps one of the prime necessities of social education is that all of us at least once in our lives should go through the general experience of living in a small group which is not our own family, and where we can discover afresh the meaning of social action and shared responsibility. In the past one moved gradually from group to group and the groups were always rather small. But now that even the village child is taken first of all from his home into the school, which is another group, and a little later transferred to a still larger group (a larger school in the neighbouring town at the age of eleven), and now that the working life of so many people demands that they shall accustom themselves to a larger group still, it is important that this adjustment to groups should be deliberately prepared for. In the old days a man could spend his whole life among his family and other relations in the same town. In the future the majority of us may have to eat in one place, work in another, sleep in another and get our recreation in yet another. Unless therefore man is to become a mere cog in various sets of social machinery, it is more than ever important that some group should take into consideration the whole of these influences upon him. In making an informal

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE HANDS

approach to education through the work of the hands it is often possible to integrate these many influences and show people their own value as persons, their value in the small group and their importance in all the various groups into which life throws them.

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EYES—I

The Seeing Eye; Posters and Broadsheets;  
Wall Newspapers; Exhibition Boxes; Logbooks;  
Pictures and Painting

*'It is not the pictures that are on trial but the spectators.'*

—WHISTLER

*'The artist is not a special kind of man but every man is a special kind of artist.'*—COOMARASWAMY

What happens with nine out of ten people if you suddenly say to them: 'How do you spell "gramophone"?' or 'rhododendron' or even a simpler but awkward word like 'reassure' or 'embarrass'? As we all know, they usually say: 'Wait a minute. Let me write it down', or 'Give me a pencil and let's see', the explanation being that most of us are much more dependent on our visual memory than, for some reason or other, we care to admit. There is a deep significance in the fact that so many people say: 'I don't quite see' when what they really mean is 'I don't quite understand'.

We have become accustomed for some time now to admit that an enormous number of people are 'hand brained', that is to say, that they are cleverer with their hands than they are with the abstractions of words and sounds, but we are only gradually coming to the realisation that quite a number of people—indeed, possibly an overwhelming majority—are 'eye brained' rather than 'ear brained', in the sense that they accept things and learn things more quickly through seeing them, than through hearing them. Indeed, it has been scientifically estimated that 84 per cent of our perception comes through our eyes. Yet we are content for the most part to be without direction or instruction in the use of this precious

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EYES—I

faculty, so valuable and so irreplaceable in that it is one of the few parts of the body for which modern surgery can seldom produce spare parts.

It is not only that we do not teach people to see things, we do not even teach them to *use* their eyes to see things. Even the majority of car drivers look at you in dumb incomprehension if you talk about eye span, and few people know how to use their eyes when they read.<sup>1</sup>

It is not surprising, therefore, that people can continue to live in extremely ugly surroundings without doing anything about it, since, perhaps mercifully, their eyes have never been trained to see them properly. The result is that while few people are indifferent to beauty many are extraordinarily indifferent to ugliness. It is a rather curious fact that people will tolerate degrees of ugliness which affront the faculty of seeing far more readily than they would tolerate the same degree of noisome smell which would affront the nasal organ, in spite of the fact that we are constantly being told that the human race is losing its sense of smell!

This question of seeing is becoming increasingly important since so much adult education of the informal sort is acquired through the eyes at the cinema; and it may be that in a few years television will absorb some of the present radio audience so that seeing may become the most important faculty in radio too. The 'seeing eye' is becoming an increasing necessity, not only for the intelligentzia of Bloomsbury, Chelsea, Manchester and Oxford, but also for those who live in Bethnal Green, Wigan and the Gorbals, not to mention those who live in that final insult to the seeing eye—modern suburbia.

People never talk or think about 'seeing things' in connection with their own locality. It is a well-known fact that few people ever visit the important buildings or picture galleries in their own neighbourhood. People only consciously 'look' when on holiday, and hence that curious, rather dreary custom practised by most holiday-makers when in dutiful mood—that of 'seeing the sights'—and as, poor wretches, they have never learned to see without strain, they tire very easily. Then, having reached the conclusion that 'seeing the sights' is a

<sup>1</sup>See Chapter IX.



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EYES—I

rather wearying business that demands something from them that they haven't been trained to give, they decide that next year they will go for a holiday where there are nice comfortable crowds rather than a lot of 'sights' to look at.

Yet, as man is capable of learning a great deal through his eyes, as most people learn more readily that way, it is quite obvious that social progress (which in a democracy is dependent upon the conversion of the majority of the people to the necessity for such progress) could be given tremendous impetus if people were trained to use their eyes, if, indeed, they were educated through their eyes. After all, the eternal struggle for goodness, truth and beauty is evidenced daily through those things which we can see as much as through those things about which we only theorise.

Nevertheless, one must be thankful for the fact that more attention is being paid to visual education at the moment than ever before. The Ministry of Education has set up a special department to give advice and direction in the matter. Experiments with Service education in war-time brought to light some extremely interesting material which could well be incorporated into a great deal of our adult education, and the film itself has so accustomed people to looking at things that an approach to education through films is one which does not frighten people away. Moreover, a great deal has been done in various youth groups which has proved beyond all shadow of doubt that the young adult, and therefore presumably the older adult, finds the visual approach acceptable.

Apart from using the film itself there are probably at least nine ways in which the approach to informal education can be made through the eyes: through using posters, broadsheets, wall newspapers, exhibitions, logbooks, pictures; through the making of one's own pictures; through looking at the world around one, and through using a vast amount of illustrative material for discussion groups.

It must be admitted that a great deal of the popularity of posters in youth clubs generally has been due to the fact that so many of the clubs are houses in such dun and drab buildings that the more of the wall one covers up the better. Almost any poster would often be better than the naked wall. The war

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EYES—I

years increased the amount of material available for this purpose. It is self-evident that a good many other places where young and old tend to congregate could also make use of the poster for decorative as well as for educational purposes. Many public houses would be none the worse for a few good posters, and many British Restaurants have shown a considerable amount of imagination in the display of posters, and the display of C.E.M.A. lithographs, which will be discussed later.

The Board of Trade and the Ministry of Fuel and Power have been responsible for posters which are at once attractive and informative. It was possible during the war years, if one selected one's material carefully, to arrange for a different subject to be dealt with each month in the form of a wall decoration. Many associations publish most attractive charts on the various problems of population and health education, and the Gas and Electrical Associations and the Ministry of Agriculture have done a great deal of work of this kind too. Many people who have attempted this method of approach have found that by grouping the posters and using a different subject group monthly they have created an interest in a few of these subjects, which has led to a series of study circles or discussion groups on matters as wide apart as coal mining and gardening, population problems and modern scientific discoveries.

One of the latter courses was quite alarming in the way it began. The unfortunate club leader had exhibited a chart which illustrated and carefully numbered all the various parts of a vacuum cleaner and explained how it works. It was just one chart in a series dealing with electrical appliances and electricity in the home, and it had seemed a failure since few members commented on it or seemed to take much interest in it. To the club leader's horror, however, on the third week of the month's display he found a group of boys collected round the picture which had been removed from the wall to the floor. In the centre of the group was a boy with a vacuum cleaner which he was proceeding to take to pieces according to the instructions on the poster. When questioned, he explained airily that the vacuum cleaner belonged to his mother

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EYES—1

and that he was mending it for her 'for a surprise'. The club leader, whose knowledge of electricity was limited to the turning of a switch, was horrified to view all the bits and pieces which can apparently be unscrewed from just one domestic appliance. However, after an evening during which the personnel of the group changed several times and advice was both proffered and scornfully refused, the vacuum cleaner was reassembled. It had been successfully repaired and it worked, and the group were so overcome by this, that very much more interest was taken in posters generally and a demand was forthcoming for 'something scientific or about hobbies'.

Many clubs might spend a proportion of their time making collections of posters and pictorial material generally. One of the most vivid personalities in the club world has a vast collection of pictures, postcards, and mounted illustrations on almost every subject which might presumably be of interest to groups of young people—dancing, costumes, churches, bridges, musical instruments, famous actors and actresses and so on. These are not kept carefully stored away to be run through in a rather desultory fashion by people when they are bored with everything else, but are used in connection with any club activity as and when they appear relevant, and they are also used for display in subject groups which are changed month by month.

In the much vaunted discussion method of education, a great deal more use might well be made of illustrative material.

For some reason or other we are apt to imagine that the only way to illustrate any discussion group is either with drawings on a blackboard, or with films, and yet a great deal more is often achieved by the more intimate method of illustrating a talk by the type of picture which can be handed round. The formation of such collections would be a piece of much-needed social service and would certainly be invaluable in enlivening and enriching discussions on topics which lend themselves to such illustration.

Naturally the assembling of a vast collection of this kind is a matter of time and of expense, but neither of these difficulties

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EYES—I

is really insuperable. The postcards of the National Gallery and the Victoria and Albert Museum were, even during the whole of the war period, one of the few things which were still obtainable at pre-war prices, and in most representative collections. In addition a great deal of this material can be culled from current magazines and periodicals. Many public libraries make a gift of a certain amount of their magazine material to clubs when it has fallen out of date. In the normal way this out-of-date material is practically useless from the point of view of general club reading since it is not of the kind that appeals to young people or to those adults who prefer lighter reading. The illustrations, however, could be most valuable and there seems to be no reason why groups of interested people should not volunteer to collect pictures, photographs and indeed any kind of illustration on certain subjects or from certain periodicals. There must be few people engaged in informal education who possess neither a great-aunt nor a grandparent or who do not know some old people who would be delighted to be given a task which was both useful to young people and educational. If the magazine gifts of various kind friends could be farmed out to official 'cutters-out and mounters', both within the club itself and among older people who would like to help, there are few groups which could not, in the space of two or three years, secure really interesting collections.

Another important method of informal education which also uses wall space is the modern revival of the old-fashioned broadsheet. Not long ago the correspondence column of many papers was filled with a series of moans from people on the subject of 'comics'. Correspondents asserted that they did much to entice children away from less lavishly illustrated literature (though why literature for children should not be lavishly illustrated was not made clear). The comic is alleged to encourage 'that lamentable habit of skipping' which incidentally was much indulged in by the great and by no means illiterate Dr. Johnson. We are told that the comic is crude and vulgar and that indeed, on all counts, it is a Bad Thing. Yet we all know that any recreation which is practised by numbers of people is obviously fulfilling a need, and that moreover the love of the

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EYES—I

cartoon and the strip cartoon is by no means confined to the very young. The American market is flooded with far cruder and more colourful material of this kind, designed especially for adults, not to mention all the 'funnies' released for American children. Quite another type of reading public—the subscriber to *Punch*—is often a subscriber, not on account of the quality of the printed material, but because of his or her liking for the drawings, particularly for the strip cartoons. Thousands of boys and girls in this country have looked forward Christmas after Christmas to such publications as *Tiger Tim's Annual* and *The Arkubs' Annual*, which are almost entirely in cartoon form; and, on the whole, they do not seem to have been more crude and vulgar or less able to stand up to hardship and difficulties, than children of generations which had no such annuals. Many an adult takes a sneaking look at the cartoon or strip in his daily paper—not in order to see what he can talk to the children about, but because he enjoys it himself.

No-one would deny that a great deal of the cruder material has very little educational value, but the universal appeal of the strip cartoon and the comic drawing might well be harnessed in order to provide bright and amusing illustrations 'to go with' all the latest information.

The National Association of Girls' Clubs and Mixed Clubs experimented over a period of eighteen months with broadsheets, using the strip cartoon method for subjects which ranged from local and parliamentary government to the ticklish question of the behaviour problems of the 'towney' when he goes to the country, and of all of us at the seaside. No matter what the subject, there has never been the slightest difficulty in selling a couple of thousand of these posters, and each month the latest version is keenly awaited and causes a great deal of interest in clubs up and down the country. The interest is not confined to clubs. There is at least one Director of Education who subscribes to the series and uses it in his general office. He asserts that there has never been a month when some of his junior clerks have not commented on the posters. Another subscriber—a publisher's reader—places his over his office door and asserts that he has never had a visitor



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EYES—I

who has not made some reference to them. Perhaps the clientèle of the publisher's reader is apt to be a little above the average intelligence. The fact remains that all types of men and women find their eyes attracted by strip cartoons. Since we have it on the good authority of King Arthur via Lord Tennyson that it is 'better to fight for the good than to rail at the ill', it would surely be more constructive educationally if we cashed in on this universal attraction of the cartoon and used it, first, to catch the eye, secondly, to give a little useful information, and then, having aroused that interest, to build something further upon this awakened interest. No series of broadsheets that has ever been issued or is likely to be issued could be regarded as a complete education in itself or as a substitute for the study group and the discussion class, but they do form a useful method of creating an appetite and are in themselves further appetisers.

Lieut. Commander Rawnsley always maintains that it was very largely due to his use of diagrams and pictures that H.M.S. *Suffolk* passed more men for higher rating than any other two ships on the China station, and it is encouraging to know that such men as himself, D. G. H. Cole and Sir Ernest Simon are exploring the whole range of the visual education field, and are making a collection of poster designs and broadsheets as well as of strip films. The great difficulty, of course, about this method is that the material must constantly be renewed and freshly presented. Therefore the greater the number of sources of supply for this kind of material, the better the displays will be. Even in the realm of the comic strip—both the entertainment 'comic' and informative strip—there are great variations in taste, and while some groups would find one method of treatment exactly right, another group might prefer to ring the changes in different treatments, while yet a third might prefer the straightforward and more direct approach of such a publishing firm as the Leicester Publishing Company, which has specialised in a great many pictorial charts on various aspects of democratic government, citizenship and kindred matters.

No consideration of visual education would be complete without paying some tribute to the work done by the late Dr.

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EYES—I

Otto Neurath of the Isotype Institute. Here one has the cartoon method *in excelsis*, as it were—the cartoon used to make statistics mean something to the ordinary man. It is only the exceptional person who is not out of his depth when people start talking in hundred thousands, let alone in millions; indeed many people are never much good at understanding what is meant—or indeed visualising what is meant—by more than a hundred, whether it be books, plates, pounds or people. Nevertheless, in a modern world decisions have to be based on comprehensive factual information, and in a democracy the ordinary citizen has the moral obligation of at least making some attempt to grasp the meaning of figures relating to exports and imports, mortality rates and building programmes. The Isotype method develops a man's judgement and comes to his aid by giving him statistical material and scientific data in a simplified graphical form. The method is an attempt to do what every good educationist should do—to select material which shall help people to judge for themselves. It is true that such selection gives one merely the bare bones; but superfluous detail and superfluous accuracy have between them quenched more thirst for knowledge than they have awakened.

In this matter, as in so many educational fields, we might study the Russian equivalent of the British Restaurant, and the Russian railway station, where the walls of the canteens are almost invariably used to provide information on subjects varying from more-than-life-size charts of the digestive system to truer-than-life pictures of the diseases to which animals are prone! It is true that most people would rather not know what was happening in the large intestine while they were partaking of a probably quite indigestible meal, but these are not the only pieces of information which are offered to the Russian, and certainly need not be the only pieces of information offered in this country.

Another method of using wall space which has numerous educational advantages is that of the wall newspaper. The wall newspaper is an excellent technique which has been exploited to a very great degree in Russia. During the war years it had a great vogue in this country among those clubs and youth

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EYES—I

centres which wanted to 'run a magazine' but could not secure sufficient paper for this, or could not afford it in any case, or did not feel that even if they could secure the paper they were justified in putting it to such use at a time of great paper shortage.

The wall newspaper necessitates an editorial board, and therefore those who had an urge to see themselves in type-script, if not in print, were able to satisfy their ambitions by sending in their material to an editor of sorts, and the few who aspired to some form of journalism were able to work off some of this urge as contributors and as members of the editorial board. Many older established clubs which 'once ran magazines and then gave them up' have asserted that the wall newspaper is a much better affair in many ways. One of the reasons given is that most club magazines, school magazines and, indeed, the magazines of countless small societies, usually find themselves, after the first flush of enthusiasm, lamentably short of contributors. Apparently the editor who has three regular contributors is usually to be congratulated, since most people seem to know magazines which are wholly written under various *noms de plume* by the editor, with the exception of the netball and football fixtures!

The wall newspaper is, as its name implies, displayed on a wall and the most convenient size seems to be 40 to 45 inches long by 30 to 36 inches wide. The main necessity therefore is a piece of extremely stiff and preferably very bright paper of this size. The editorial board then decide what items of news, what original compositions and what other material they intend to bring to the notice of the group each month, and such information is either typed or written with appropriate column heads on this large sheet of paper. Over a period of three years many clubs have produced most striking efforts of this kind, but perhaps one of the most exciting developments has been the development of the wall newspaper which is not a club newspaper or club magazine in miniature, but a wall newspaper dealing with current affairs.

Mr. A. P. Simon, one of the grand pioneers of informal education, experimented many years ago in this field of current affairs with a group of unemployed boys between the ages of

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EYES—I

15 and 25, the majority of whom were not very bright. Each boy was asked to produce for the weekly meeting a newspaper cartoon, and the result was, as one might imagine, a most varied collection. Nevertheless, and indeed, partly because of this, it provided a reliable touchstone of the events which were of outstanding interest, or which could be assumed to be of outstanding interest in the minds of these boys. Each boy was asked to say something about the cartoon that he had contributed, and this helped them a great deal in becoming articulate and helped to promote informal discussion.

In those days the wall newspaper was not a matter of common knowledge, but since that time other groups have adopted this method of collecting cartoons and mounting them into a wall newspaper of the 'news of the month' variety. It is astonishing to find how much factual information can be gathered and how much interest is stimulated by the ordinary day to day cartoon. During the war years, for instance, a great many of the cartoons, particularly during the siege of Moscow and the threatened invasion of England, used comparisons with the Napoleonic wars. Few youth groups (particularly such as Mr. Simon usually manages to attract unto himself) would sit down seriously to discuss the Napoleonic wars, but with a cartoon which puts the frustrated invader Napoleon in contrast to the frustrated invader Hitler, the French Revolution, revolutions in general, the advisability of having a 'nice' revolution, and the way history repeats itself were all matters discussed and studied by what at first sight might have been regarded as a most unpromising group.

Another club, which specialised in the wall newspaper built up from cartoons, shook my complacency very deeply. On being invited to admire the month's cartoon newspaper, resplendent in its background of Italian green on the club wall, I tentatively pointed out that 'it was a pity that one of the cartoons had been pasted in upside down, since it rather spoiled the look of the whole thing'. This well-meaning remark called forth the crushing comment: 'Don't you *know* that in pictorial advertisement and any form of journalism the right thing to do is to attract people's attention? That cartoon which is upside



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EYES—1

down is the most important one of the month, and therefore it is deliberately put in that way in order to attract people's attention to it.' The deliberate mistake of 'Monday Night at Eight' was the same technique in radio.

Before passing on to other forms of visual education, it might be helpful to make a suggestion to those who complain bitterly that they cannot use their walls for any form of visual education because they either rent, or are lent, rooms which have to be left each evening as they found them. This difficulty is maddening but not insuperable. The answer is to obtain permission from the owners or other users of the building to put small picture hooks at the corner of any walls which it is desired to use for the exhibition of posters, wall newspapers, and so on. The walls should be measured up and a width of hessian—as a rule the 36 inches wide material is best for this—should be eyeletted at the corners and stretched on to these hooks. Any exhibition material can then be pinned on to the hessian, and it is the work of a few moments to unhook it at the end of the evening and roll it up. It can then be stored in a cupboard on the premises, or even if it has to be taken away it is neither very heavy nor very awkward. The posters can be left in place on the hessian and only removed when new ones would normally be placed on the walls. The use of strips of hessian sometimes has the additional advantage of enabling one to cover rather dingy walls, and although oatmeal coloured hessian is most generally used for this purpose even more attractive results are achieved by using a brightly coloured material which forms a vivid background for black and white exhibition material.

Little need be said here about the making of one's own posters for various activities. This is already done in many youth clubs and some very useful leaflets on the subject are obtainable. Quite apart from the utilitarian advantages of such a procedure, one must recognise the value of poster work for the neat-fingered, careful and tidy-minded boy or girl who gets from such work creative satisfaction and release. Some of the shyest and most antisocial of boys have been turned into valuable members of society by the time they reach manhood because club leaders were clever enough to



give them every encouragement to use their talent for poster designing for the club. It is very important that people should be allowed to shine in something. For many of us, if we are not allowed to shine in our own right the reaction is to try to shine 'in our own wrong', as it were—in antisocial activities, quarrels, even in the worst cases as criminals and lunatics. We all long for at least one crowded hour of joyous life, and if we are not given a creative outlet which shall bring us the steady and warming glow of fulfilment we are all tempted to fire off the rocket of destruction and antisocial behaviour.

The next step in visual education is probably the collection and making of exhibitions and models—models whether they are bought, begged or made are always fascinating. There is a great deal of the child in all of us and therefore the toy, the doll's house, the miniature reproduction of anything from battleships and aeroplanes to furniture and animals, never fails to delight. The Leicestershire Education Authority has experimented successfully for some years with the preparation of exhibition boxes of educational material for issue to classes studying certain subjects or certain aspects of those subjects. In the Youth Club field, the National Association of Girls' Clubs and Mixed Clubs has also prepared a somewhat different type of exhibition box for the use of adolescent groups. Up to the present these boxes have been of two kinds—those dealing with countries and those dealing with crafts. The boxes were first started as a result of observing the keen interest which young people took in the models of toys, furniture and young parachute jumpers which were borrowed for education week-ends on Russia, and it was felt that a similar scheme could be worked out for other countries. The most important point in preparing any exhibition is to decide upon the main message or subject, and then to subdivide within certain very well-defined limits. The most successful exhibition boxes seem to be those in which there is a large number of coloured photographs of about quarto size, mounted on stiff cardboard or thin plywood screens, one or two charts, some cartoons, and such 'actualities' as toys of the country, dolls dressed in the national costume of the country, pieces of

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EYES—1

embroidery or products of the country (in the case of a box on China, for instance, pieces of Chinese jade were included), stamps, and a limited amount of reading material. Among the reading material it has always been found useful to include one or two children's picture books as well as more adult literature, some distinctive recipes of the country and some music and songs. These help any group of young people who have been studying the country if they wish to arrange a concert or entertainment or social which will act as a climax to their studies. Other groups use the exhibition box as the first introduction to the subject, and the study group is formed later. It has been found, for instance, that quite a number of clubs like to hire the material for a period of three weeks to a month, and to conclude their whole study by an evening or week-end at which the exhibition material is on display. Often some entertainment of music and songs is given and followed by the provision of refreshments of the kind one might have in that particular country.

The activity box aims at a rather different group. One of the major difficulties in introducing a new craft or process to a group of young people is that, owing to the waxing and waning of enthusiasms which is so characteristic of the adolescent, it is impossible to know whether a certain activity will take on or not. If the funds and equipment grants of the group are not very large, one is reluctant to embark on expenditure on craft materials which may remain unused in a cupboard after the first few evenings. Even if there is no lack of money for equipment, it seems wasteful to order material which will not be properly used.

The exhibition box of this type is therefore designed to contain all the tools needed for the craft, some of the best instruction books or leaflets, some completed articles to show the range of the craft and, what is perhaps most important of all, articles in various stages of completion to show each step in the process of making.

Much of people's diffidence with regard to craft work is the result of not being quite clear about what in fact it is possible to make. One realises how true this is when a small child presses paper and pencil into one's hand and says,

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EYES—I

'Draw something'. Immediately one is overcome by a sort of paralysis of the idea centre, and few people will not reply with varying degrees of diffidence, 'What shall I draw?' If the child then says 'Draw a house, or a cow, or a pig' the paralysis seems to be broken down. Even if one dismisses the horse, cow or pig as being beyond one's executive powers, nevertheless it gives one an idea as to what one *can* draw—maybe a cat, or that last refuge of the non-artist, the little line figures which a small girl once christened as 'the family of Mr. and Mrs. Coathanger'.

The use of exhibition boxes enables a club or group which feels that it might like to do lino-cutting or plastics or a handyman's course to hire equipment for a short period. Moreover, all is not wasted even if the craft does not take on, since it does young people no harm to study, if only for a night, the various intricacies of any particular art or craft. Even if they then dismiss it as being too difficult, they are at least left with a greater respect for those who master such crafts, and for the objects they make.

The Nursery Schools' Association prepared exhibition boxes of this kind during the war years to show people what entrancing toys could be made out of all kinds of waste material such as cotton reels, cocoa tins, odd pieces of leather and so on, and many a woman's group as well as a youth group was encouraged to embark on toy making as a result of hiring such an exhibition.

Another interesting experiment in the use of exhibition boxes was made in America in 1945. The exhibit method was used by the Chicago Jewish National Service and Employment Centre to help people to find the answer to such questions as 'Am I doing all I can for the war effort?', 'What is going to happen to me after the war?' or 'What possibilities of employment will there be in the post-war world for those now in the Forces?' The displays and demonstrations were simple and attractive so that people might grasp them readily and they represented performances which actually occur in various jobs. Such tasks as that of sorting rivets and testing items with a gauge, selecting right and wrong methods in setting up small jobs, assembling simple items, using slide

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EYES—I

rules, making objects to blueprints and decoding Morse messages were shown. Other sections included a 'quiz' so that those who had seen the exhibition could then find out how much they had grasped concerning it.

The organisers of the scheme hoped, in addition to everything else, to increase the community awareness of vocational problems; and one wonders whether carefully prepared though smaller exhibition boxes of this kind could not be of immense value in this country in showing both parents and children what certain jobs 'let you in for'. They would also show the public generally what a great deal of skill, care and devotion goes into the making of those articles which, because they are mass produced, some of us tend to take for granted. Just as despising a job is a short step down the steep slope of despising the doer of that job, so respect for a process is conversely the first step very often to giving one additional respect for the person who performs that process. Many of the exhibitions which have been made on a fairly lavish scale during the war years, such as those showing how cotton was used in the war effort, the by-products of coal, etc., bear within them the germ of an idea which on a very much less ambitious scale might be of great use in helping children and parents over the difficult business of vocational selection.

However it is not only in this exhibition-box method that exhibition material can be used. After all, what are our museums and art galleries but exhibition boxes writ large? Unfortunately many people need the gentle introduction of the small exhibition boxes before they will venture into those buildings reserved for the exhibition of large quantities of material. This, as a rule, is not due to the fact that they have never in their lives visited a museum or art gallery, but because they have done so—once! Large numbers of our museums and art galleries would be all the better for a good fire. Owing to the natural reluctance of selection committees to offend wealthy patrons or respected citizens who make gifts, many of these places might well bear the motto over their door which forms part of one of the saddest sentences in that

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EYES—1

saddest of books *Jude the Obscure*, the farewell message of the children who killed themselves 'becos we are too menny'. Museums are indeed cluttered up with 'too menny' of all sorts of things, and although progressive curators up and down the country are doing much surreptitious weeding out, a large number of such buildings are merely glorified junk boxes with one or two really lovely things thrown in.

The untrained eye is wearied by such vast collections and totally unable to select. But those who have seen an exhibition on a very small scale, and who can be persuaded to go to look at some more of the same thing in the local museum, are spared that confusion and that weariness of spirit which descend so often on the unprepared who try to swallow the local museum or art gallery at one visit. This is another thing that people ought to be told. It might be part of the duty of the much needed National Society for the Prevention of Indigestible Education to give a few simple hints about visiting such places; in the meanwhile a great deal could be done in youth groups and adult education circles. The only way to visit an art gallery, in fact, is to find out what half dozen things you most want to see before you get there, and then to look only at these and come away. The same thing is true of museums. If you happen to catch other things out of the tail of your eye which seem to be worth a further look, then they must be reserved for another visit.

It is interesting to notice how those young people who visit an art gallery or a museum on a project—a project which may have been introduced through the learning of a certain craft or the study of a certain country—come away as they should do, refreshed and having extended their personalities. One cannot but wish that it were possible to take hosts of people, young and old, to an imaginatively selective museum such as the Geffrye Museum. Here one comes upon the astonishing spectacle (though it is sad that it should be astonishing) of young people running in and out of a museum after school and on Saturday afternoons, enjoying themselves at ingenious games of selection invented by the curator. The



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EYES—I

work of such people as Mrs. Harrison at the Geffrye has made it the place of living visual education that a museum should be, just as that rare combination of scholarship and showmanship possessed by Sir Kenneth Clark made the National Gallery in war-time 'national' in the true sense of that word. During the difficult days of war the National Gallery, with its midday concerts and its special exhibitions, became a place where people actually went to enjoy themselves, and only a little encouragement is needed elsewhere to bring people into many other beautiful galleries and museums. The persevering work of C.E.M.A. has had its effect on the one side, the more enlightened curators are preparing the ground on the other; it is for the Community Centres, the Youth groups and all those engaged in further education to do their part also in preparing people to enjoy our rich heritage of beautiful things to see.

Not one of the least difficulties about family life is that there are so few places where the average young married family can go with the children. It is possible to go for walks, and to take them to the cinema (though with a sense of guilt as a rule). In church and in lectures the youngsters are more likely to prove disturbing to others. The result is that average good intelligent parents are cut off in the most vigorous period of their lives from everything except such isolated educational activity as reading and the radio supply. If only picture galleries and museums were not so inhuman—if there were rooms for the children, and a welcome for the children (as there is in the Geffrye Museum), and if meals were 'laid on'—the Museum and the Art Gallery might become places where the family could go as a whole, and where every member might find something to interest, entertain and educate himself when they got there. The time has surely come when we should cease to urge young people to have bigger and better families if we do not provide at the same time at least a few places where children and parents are welcomed together, where the family can go, and either remain as a unit when inside, or split up according to their age and inclinations. Such provision is badly needed, and particularly at week-ends, which have a habit of being wet.

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EYES—I

It is small wonder if so many parents who find themselves cut off from stimulating and educative influences by their very dearest possessions—their children—all too soon take a first-class season on the line of least resistance, and only when the ticket expires as the children grow older find that the line has led them along a single track rail to that most depressing station in the world, 'Out-of-Touch'.

Another method of visual education is the preparation of logbooks. In actual fact this is nothing more than a glorified version of the Victorian scrapbook, with the difference that instead of allowing the subject matter to flit from the sticky cut-out pictures on Christmas crackers to the 'view' that Uncle Edward sent from Malta, the logbook is designed around one subject. Many a group has found itself stymied in discussion classes because they had not in fact known enough about the subject. It is useless to suggest to the average non-academic person that he should 'read it up'. The preparation of a logbook on the subject is a different matter, and many a group has compiled its own book on housing, on education, on 'the baby I would like to have', on post-war reconstruction, on cookery, parliamentary government, local government and countless numbers of countries, without realising how much reading they have done as a by-product of the collection of the material. Many of these logbooks are beautifully decorated with captions illustrated with pen and ink drawings, and even when all the pictorial matter and the printed matter have been cut out and pasted into the book the work has often been done with exquisite care and neatness.

In many cases people have found that the book that they started needs additions and therefore has to be re-bound, and some very workmanlike bindings have also resulted from what originally began as an exercise book. During the preparation of a logbook people have found themselves going through many and various sources of information, books, periodicals, newspapers, radio, film and theatre notices and so on, while the preparation of a logbook on one subject has quite frequently stimulated another group to a similar activity,

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EYES—I

or the same group to the preparation of a book on another subject, or another section of the same subject.

As far as youth groups are concerned, the preparation of the log-book is on the whole rather more successfully carried out as a co-operative effort than as the work of separate individuals each preparing his own logbook on the same subject. Young people who meet in the evenings have very little time to devote to the preparation of one book each, but working together they will often produce something very attractive.

An interesting story is told of a club in Sheffield where the girls were working on a cookery logbook which was to be carefully indexed and arranged under various heads such as 'Supper for four', 'Sandwiches for a party', 'Snacks for the hike' and so forth. One group of girls was writing out the recipes and another group looking for suitable illustrative material. The boys were regarding the whole venture as something, if not beneath their contempt, certainly beneath their co-operation. Eventually, however, the ham-handedness of one or two of the girls with the paste bottle and the scissors was too much for some of the boys, and they were pushed from their places at the table to make room for the more neat-fingered males. When the club leader returned later in the evening it was to find much the same situation as that so touchingly rendered in the play *Dear Octopus*, where the adults had 'eased' the children out of their painting. In this case it was the girls who were rather disconsolately acting as fags for the boys, who were conducting the major part of the whole operation and who had already decided that a logbook of this kind would be all the better if it were extended to contain pictures of model kitchens and model kitchen appliances. The resulting books were really delightful, but what educationist would ever have dared to ask a group of boys to compile a logbook on either cookery or kitchens?

Another interesting collection of logbooks has been made at the Peckham Central School during the war years. Since 1941 the whole school with the exception of the School Certificate group has been engaged on international studies,

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EYES—I

working on project lines. During the most distressing periods of enemy activity the Head Mistress found that very little could be expected in the way of prepared homework from any of these groups. By the Christmas of 1944, for instance, there was not a child in the school who had not either lost a relative or relatives, or had his or her home damaged or totally destroyed by either doodlebugs or rockets, even if their homes had survived the earlier blitzes.

The preparation of a logbook was something which could be undertaken as a co-operative effort by the whole of the family. It could be taken down to the shelter. One could do a lot on one night when there was peace and quiet, and nothing for a few nights when there wasn't. The Head Mistress feels that she was indeed fortunate that during the most trying times in that area the project was Russia, a country in which so many of the children's parents were interested too. Some of the logbooks which were prepared during the most difficult period of the war for Londoners are among the most interesting. One cannot refrain from mentioning particularly the work of one girl, whose section on the ballet is delightfully illustrated, not only by pictures cut from illustrated magazines and so on, but by her own drawings and paintings, and who in sheer enthusiasm has begun and ended her logbook with verses of her own composition.

Harvest books, books on Milk, on Coal and Collieries, on every variety of career, on Ships and Shipbuilding, have all been prepared by various groups. The variety of subject is only exceeded by the individuality of treatment. Once a genuine interest has been aroused, a pride in the presentation of the material is associated closely with the pride and interest of collecting it.

By the time groups have been getting interested in posters, exhibition material and logbooks, the ground has been prepared for the picture proper.

During the war years the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (now the Arts Council) put the nation under a debt of gratitude by arranging exhibitions of paint-

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EYES—I

ings all over the country, and it is probably fair to say that no-one has been more surprised than C.E.M.A. at the enormous numbers of people who have visited such exhibitions. They were housed in all sorts of places, from cathedrals to village inns, from public libraries to air-raided shelters.

When C.E.M.A. first considered how to meet the public demand for visual arts in war-time it not unnaturally turned to the British Institute for Adult Education, which had been running 'Art for the People' exhibitions and showing them in such places as educational settlements, clubs, libraries and public show-rooms since 1935. The Council's help enabled the B.I.A.E. to increase their exhibitions from four in 1939, to fourteen in 1940. But even this proved inadequate; and, when two years later it became clear that the principal provincial museums and galleries were beginning to resume their activities, the Council decided to assume responsibility for its own circulating exhibitions. These are composed in the main of original paintings; and, as so many of the older and more valuable pictures were removed to places of safety for the duration of the war, considerable emphasis was laid on the work of contemporary artists.

The weekly attendance at these exhibitions often averaged over 6,000—the special C.E.M.A. Collection of Paintings was seen by 36,000 people in Norwich in August 1943—so it is no exaggeration to say that at least a million people visited these exhibitions in a year.

In order to meet the demand for pictures in the new centres of living, working and eating (the hostel, the Fire Service and A.R.P. posts, and public and works' canteens, that were brought into existence by war conditions), the Council sponsored the publication of a number of lithographs and other reproductions. Artists were commissioned to design a series of lithographs to illustrate the appropriate occupations of the twelve months of the year. In addition, half a dozen collotype reproductions were made of oil paintings by Constable, Degas, Renoir and other masters. These were not issued to the general public, but to Government Departments, the Services and recognised bodies for war-workers.



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EYES—I

The reception of these lithographs in one organisation alone is worth recording. Sets were taken round to youth clubs in a 'by the way, have you seen these' fashion. Nowhere did they fail to arouse a great deal of comment and interest. 'Gosh, I wonder what the feller was getting at when he did that'—'Who is the chap who did this one?'—'Have you got any more?' In a month over three hundred were distributed, and again it was proved that man invariably likes good things if they are placed within his reach.

The reception of the lithographs was on the whole very much more enthusiastic among young people than among older people. It was amusing to discover in numbers of groups to which a set of lithographs had been taken to act as a basis for discussion, that the young people never failed to be interested in either the subject or the method of handling the subject, even where they were not always quite sure whether they 'liked' the picture or not. Possibly the lithographs have done a most important piece of work if they have convinced small groups here and there that the merit of a work of art is not affected by whether they personally like it. Shakespeare's splendid retort when Jacques objected to the name Audrey, 'There was no thought of pleasing you when she was christened', is equally relevant in the field of art. Numbers of young people have begun to realise that the mere fact that they have never seen what the artist has portrayed is immaterial. Artists just don't happen to see what we see and the tribute that the ordinary man pays to art is for the most part what he feels about it. The artist is not concerned with abstract beauty and visual facts, but with communicating experience, and the main difference between nineteenth century and twentieth century painting is that the former was concerned with visible fact, while the twentieth century painter takes visible facts and then describes the emotions they arouse.

Another interesting experiment was made when a set of lithographs was taken to a group side by side with a set of reproductions of what are commonly referred to as 'old masters'. With few exceptions the younger members felt that the modern work said more to them than the 'old masters',

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EYES—I

though it must be confessed that many of the young people seemed to feel that anything labelled 'old' implied 'old-fashioned'. Nevertheless, in the realm of art generally it is probably fair to suggest that many people can only be led to enjoy the 'old' in literature, music, pictures or even sculpture and architecture, through first learning to look at and understand contemporary works of art. Many of the most progressive teachers of history are coming to the conclusion that there is a great deal to be said for confining one's early studies of history to stories of the lives of great men and stories of how people lived, and then switching right over to a study of modern history, and working backwards from this. It is undoubtedly the experience of many people embarking on education work, both among adults and those who have just left school, that the only way is in this method of working backwards.

For instance (as will be pointed out later, in considering reading) many a young person becomes interested in the more lurid works of Stevenson and the Brontës by way of the modern thriller. It is perhaps one of the reasons why the W.E.A. seems to thrive on so many current events classes. The ordinary man and woman, unreasonably perhaps, want to understand the world about them first, and if anyone insists that in order to get a grasp of modern literature they must study Shakespeare first, or in order to get a grasp of modern history they must study Tudor England first, they are likely to be frightened away. It is, of course, quite true that it is the past which makes the present, but it is the privilege of the student to illuminate the present for ordinary men and women by illustrations from the past, rather than his duty to insist that everyone takes the long and weary road which he himself has travelled. Had they been capable of treading this long and weary road, or had they been sufficiently interested to do so, they would have been students too and he would have had nothing to tell them!

Another most interesting experiment in introducing the modern British artist's work to a larger public has been inaugurated by four London brewers in association with the Central Institute of Art and Design. They have commissioned

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EYES—I

water-colours and drawings of historic London scenes, and selections of these are to be shown in more than 200 public houses in London and the Home Counties. Only a few of the pictures are of public houses—the subjects range from river scenes to gardens, from churches to hop-fields, from places of historic beauty to St. Pancras after a raid; so that following on the heels of poetry in pubs we may have art in pubs—and how right that is.

But looking at pictures is not enough. It is probably true to say that many more people are capable of expressing themselves through some artistic medium than ever attempt to do so. Some years ago a commercial undertaking which offered to teach people how to become commercial artists used to advertise its wares with the engaging slogan, 'If you can write you can draw'. It is, after all, not for nothing that in China there is no distinction between a piece of writing and a drawing. For a very large number of people this is probably true, just as numbers of people could be told with equal truth, 'If you can speak you can sing' or 'If you can learn verse you can write it'. We are inclined to forget that we are all makers of pictures and makers of plays in our dreams. It is not only the artist and the dramatist who have exciting, vivid and dramatic dreams. If everyone can do it in his sleep, it is reasonable to suppose that a good many more people could do it when they were awake if they were not so diffident on the one hand and so lazy on the other.

The chief difficulty is that so many people who are interested in an art form are always trying to measure up their achievements against those of the really great artists, which is unutterably depressing. The great painter is a joy and delight to lesser men, but he would be the last to deny them the joy and delight that they get from splashing paint about in a way that satisfies them. It is probably true to say that numbers of people could obtain very real satisfaction from working with paint or working with clay if they were not obsessed with the idea that 'no-one has a right to do this unless what he produces is likely to be a work of art.' Large numbers of people work off their desire to paint by painting

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EYES—I

floors, walls, doors and furniture, because many of these house-painters are too diffident or too afraid of the ribaldry of their families to work it off on a piece of canvas. It is one of the most regrettable features of many of our drawing and painting classes that only those who 'can' are encouraged to go on 'doing' in adolescence or later life. The small child paints with joy and abandon, but as he gets older people are inclined to ask him *what* he is drawing and painting, and this together with the awakening of his own critical faculty depresses him. He begins to feel that it 'ought' to look like something, and once an 'ought' comes into any art it strangles it.

It has been one of the most amazing features of work in adolescent groups to find how many young people long to paint and draw but have to be patiently coaxed back to it because of this 'ought', this high standard which they have imposed upon their own achievements. In many youth clubs the way in has been through the painting of the club walls and the club furniture, and many a wall painting has been started through a piece of inspired fooling on the part of one of the young painters. It is a pity that we do not use wall painting a great deal more. It has one supreme advantage in that it can be rubbed off and one can begin again, whereas the picture that has been bought has to be lived with so very often long after one has outgrown it.

Many youth groups and many war workers' clubs have shown that a great deal of valuable release can be obtained through splashing paint about, and a great deal of co-operative work can be done not only in the committee room and the drama group, but on the very walls of the club themselves. Some of the most interesting murals one could wish to see have been produced by groups of seven or eight young people in this way. One calls to mind with particular pleasure a mural depicting the scenes of a fairground which ran right round the hall of one club. Another group, through co-operative efforts, arranged a series of murals depicting various club activities, a series which contained a most realistic portrayal of a football scrum, side by side with a highly impressionistic treatment of the dancing class.

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EYES—I

We are always paying lip service to co-operative effort, but painting in this way, if one is venturesome enough and is prepared to give a minimum of advice, can be the most satisfactory method of co-operation. After all, it is only first cousin to scene painting, which has long been one of the by-products of the drama class, and your scene painter has within him much of that technique which is demanded of the painter of murals.

Ordinary painting on pieces of paper and on canvas should not be denied to people just because they are not likely to produce a Mona Lisa. Young people are always demanding to know 'how it works' and one of the most interesting classes on painting was that in which the instructor was showing the various methods of putting paint on to canvas, from the palette knife method to the stand-back-and-shut-your-eyes-and-dab method, from clever and beautiful brush work to finger painting. Alas, finger painting is only smiled upon in the most up-to-date nursery schools, and yet one has seen a group of adolescents all of whom swore they could not draw for toffee (though why toffee should be drawn for has never been satisfactorily explained) spending a riotously happy and creative evening in finger painting a set of nursery rhymes, dignity being preserved by pointing out that they were being done for the use of a play centre!

After all, art in the modern world is not a luxury but a matter of health and happiness. It is not for nothing that a great deal of psychotherapy concerns itself with plain sewing, the making of toys, weaving and painting. Art has proved itself invaluable in the rehabilitation of countless numbers of people suffering from some form of mental, or if you prefer the term, nervous breakdown, but its value as a preventive of such mental disturbances does not seem to have been fully realised as yet.

The value of art as a method of preserving mental health, however, has been recognised by many of the greatest men and women. Many books have been written on the subject of the hobbies of the great, but the great themselves frequently maintain, probably not without truth, that it is their hobbies which have kept them sane when they have been working at high



pressure. 'To restore psychic equilibrium we should call into use those parts of the mind which direct both eyes and hand,' says Winston Churchill in *Thoughts and Adventures*. 'Best of all and easiest to procure are sketching and painting in all forms. Painting came to my rescue in a most trying time. Painting is a companion with whom one may hope to walk a great part of life's journey. One by one the more vigorous sports and exacting games fall away. Muscles may relax and feet and hands slow down. The nerves of youth and manhood become less trusty but painting is a friend who makes no undue demands, excites to no exhausting pursuits, keeps faithful pace even with feeble steps and holds her canvas as a screen between us and the envious eyes of time or the surly advance of decrepitude. Happy are the painters for they shall not be lonely. Light and colour, vision and hope shall keep them companion to the end, or almost to the end, of the journey.'

As well as being a co-operative effort for the young and a companion for the old, the value of painting and drawing has yet to be explored as a method of emotional release for those adolescents who are too withdrawn into themselves and too enclosed in their shell of reserve to mix with others very happily or to trust others with their confidence in matters of difficulty.

In one of the most progressive of our Approved Schools a sketching class was organised by the Headmaster's wife, herself no mean artist. Small groups of boys went out sketching with her, and in many cases a study of the work produced by these young people gives a very clear indication of the state of their minds, their emotional development and their difficulties. In many cases one finds that in any sketch or illustration which they make there is an exaggerated emphasis either on the personal or the impersonal element. There are those young people who portray the chaotic state of their minds by the chaotic nature of their drawings, by the wild riot of colour, by the formlessness of their design. Others again portray their inability to cope with life, and with freedom, by the careful meticulousness of their work, by their fondness for straight lines, by their accurate measurement and by their desire to conform to the strictest standard of formalised art that they

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EYES—I

know; for although a great deal of disturbance is caused by chaos, a great deal of emotional disturbance is also caused by young people setting themselves too rigid a standard and causing chaos in their own minds by their very demand for order.

The adolescent girl whose picture of a sunset is not complete unless it contains the balcony, the playing fountain and the blue crinolined lady, with a line of poplars in the middle distance and on the skyline the pink glow from a setting sun, a light that never was on sea or land, is portraying her romanticism, her desire for beauty and her panicky retreat into a formalised version of that beauty. The boy who illustrated the nursery rhyme of Little Tommy Tucker with a pen and ink drawing, so meticulously lined that it might almost have been an etching, was portraying his own fear of freedom, and further revealed his own feeling that he was an outcast from society by portraying Little Tommy Tucker outside the closed door and window of a house, an almost unheard-of setting for the hero of those verses.

A study of adolescent painting often reveals very clearly the emotional conflict of that age, and probably to no other age group can one more truly apply the small child's dictum, 'First I fink and then I draw my fink'. A very clear indication of what numbers of adolescents are thinking comes through in their drawings. And lest it should be supposed that it is unwise to warn them of this by setting it down in cold print, may we hasten to assure the layman that the psychologist is trained to see what the amateur artist seeks to hide. In fact, the more people try to hide it, the easier on the whole it is to spot.

One of the most interesting art classes in connection with a youth centre is conducted in the East End of London, and a study of the material from this group of young painters reveals a great deal about their conditions of life and their attitude towards that life. The young city dweller who has little knowledge of country life often produces completely unrealistic and stiff country life scenes and uses very dingy or else very strong colours. Yet when it comes to people, or streets, the work is charged with a vividness which is almost unaffected

by the rather sombre colours which they usually choose. On the whole more boys than girls seem to enjoy these painting groups. It may be that a girl is not so dependent on painting since she at least gets some outlet for creative activity, low-grade though it may be, through the practice of the almost universal craft of knitting. The boy has no such outlet and therefore possibly turns to painting with greater zest. But this very zest—the very enthusiasm with which these small groups deploy themselves and go on from strength to strength—is an argument for paying much greater attention to drawing and painting in further education.

When one has made or attempted to make pictures of one's own, one returns with sharpened appreciation to the 'sights' constantly presented in town and country. Indeed, an important reason for interesting people in pictorial art is that they should become dissatisfied with the ugliness and squalor which surrounds them. Anyone who has tried to paint flowers has from that moment always looked at flowers with a different eye and come to realise that the very arrangement of flowers is in itself an art. It has been interesting to see that in recent years numbers of youth groups have been brave enough to revive those old-fashioned flower-hunting and flower-arranging competitions—not as isolated activities but as part of a competitive festival. When one considers how long many a woman takes to obtain a perfectly ordinary arrangement of a bunch of flowers in a vase, this is perhaps another thing which might help to promote more pleasing and adventurous decorations in the homes of the future. We have become almost as frightened of flowers as we have of colour; and flower arrangement has become for many a stereotyped arrangement of one type of flower in one type of vase—or, even worse, the growth of a school of fashion which places a snowdrop in an egg-cup and calls it decoration. The very growth of an awareness of colour has resulted in an absence of colour, and having discarded the mulberries, puces, magentas and bottle greens of Victorian days we are left with little but sunshine yellow. It is not much of an adventure to know what was wrong with the taste of the past if all it does is to fill us with distrust for any type of richness or lavishness. We are so afraid

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EYES—I

of Bad Taste that most people are now resigned to having no taste at all, and instead of having the creative vulgarity of the Victorian age we have refined creativeness out of existence.

One does not paint or draw for very long before finding that one has to go and *look* at things if one is to do very much. Many groups who would regard it as an extremely self-conscious undertaking to go out deliberately to look at a church have found themselves going out to sketch a church, from which it is a very short step indeed to being inveigled inside the building. To many young people painting has thus proved to be an introduction to a study and love of architecture.

A most interesting sketch book was that belonging to an eighteen-year-old boy who had tried to paint and found he could not, but who, on joining a sketching class which had gone to a near-by church, had found great delight in sketching flying buttresses, gargoyles and what in the early stages of his studies he called 'different shaped windows'. The somewhat neglected hobby of collecting brass rubbings is another introduction both to art and to church and social history for many young people. It is one of those hobbies that can give a holiday in many areas of England point, direction and interest; and a great deal of inter-club activity might be based on exchanges of brass rubbings as between one area and another. Worcestershire and Herefordshire might engage in such lend-lease activities with Somerset and Dorset, or exchanges could be made as between city and country.

This study of the world around one, seen through the painter's or the architect's eye, is for many people the way to citizenship and it is interesting to note that the Y.W.C.A. has organised a series of regional courses which has its basis in showing people the history of a town through the study of its beauty. First one sees 'the sights' and then one relates these sights to the lives of the people who, alas, so often take them for granted.

In Peterborough, for instance, the Peterborough Museum and the Cathedral formed the focal point for the history of the county in a programme which extended to both music and church history. Although the courses have been of very short

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EYES—I

duration, it is quite obvious that anyone who had been interested at Peterborough might well join a group later on visiting such places as Fotheringay or Norwich. Those whose eyes have been opened to the glories of Peterborough Cathedral are in a frame of mind when they may be ready to be introduced to the poetry of John Clare. Those who have seen the collection of old musical instruments at Norwich, or who have visited the Gate Theatre in that city, are more ready to appreciate the social history of Norfolk. These sight-seeing courses should never become so overloaded that they are exhausting, but we all know what a difference it makes to visit a place under the direction of somebody who knows and loves it. One who has tried to paint or draw, who has visited a museum or even arranged a wall newspaper or a poster, has developed to some degree the seeing eye and is more ready to enjoy that history which is recorded in stone.

Much citizenship indeed can be learned through the preparation of collections of pictures, maps, charts, diagrams and newspaper cuttings. The St. Just Youth Club in Cornwall undertook an extraordinarily interesting project of this nature called 'The Study of our own Neighbourhood'. Charts were prepared on such subjects as 'Where we Work', showing the distances from home to work travelled by members each day, 'Our Farms', showing charts of different acreages and produce, 'Where Farm Produce goes', showing a map of the produce radiating out from St. Just to other parts of England, 'Industries in St. Just', 'Mines in Cornwall', and 'How men and women earned their living in St. Just in 1931'. A model of a modern farm and maps and charts were loaned by the Cornwall Electric Power Company, and the whole project was concluded by a week-end conference under adult tutors who discussed in various groups farming, housing and town planning, and education. Such a project includes a great deal of education at the visual level.

If many of us had eyes which really saw, we would not allow people to live in some of the unutterably squalid surroundings in which they do. In the past social reform has relied for its impetus on those who felt very strongly. It is the people whose feelings have been offended who have raised the



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EYES—I

outcry and who have often been accused of sentimentalism. The cultivators of the seeing eye might well join the ranks of those whose feelings have been offended. Social progress is not so assured that we can afford to ignore any form of education which may increase the numbers of those who insist that such progress shall become a reality enjoyed by the many rather than a dream indulged in by the few.

## VII

### THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EYES—2

---

Mechanical Aids; Lantern; Film Strip;  
Educational Films; Documentaries;  
the Commercial Film; Film Groups

---

*'The chief problem of propaganda in a democracy does not lie in proving its necessity but rather in developing its wise and democratic use along the path of education.'*—JOHN GRIERSON

*'Many think there can be no fundamental change in the classroom. They are willing to use modern aids to help them to go on doing what they have done in the past. But they cannot conceive of the possibility of doing quite new things. Yet unless education can learn to do quite new things human beings will never catch up with the technical revolutions produced by their science. They are already dangerously behind.'*

—PATRICK MEREDITH

If one is using illustrative material as an aid to discussion and if one makes collections of pictures, postcards, etc., which can be passed round, it is but a step to the various mechanical aids which can be used for this purpose. The oldest form of illustrated talk is, perhaps, the lantern lecture, and there is an astonishing number of slides available on every conceivable subject. The Victoria and Albert Museum alone has a comprehensive library of slides which can be loaned out at very small charges and this is but one of many sources of supply.

Unfortunately, however, the lantern lecture and the lantern itself have fallen into disrepute. This is partly due perhaps to the weight and bulk of the slides themselves—the fact that they are easily broken and that they are such a nuisance to pack and post and carry from place to place. On the other hand, perhaps the main reason for the discrediting of the lantern has been the fact that it has been handled so badly. We

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EYES—2

have all suffered at one time or another from those extremely dry lecturers with their interminable selection of slides which they describe in dismal and uninterested tones punctuated by the thumping of what they insist on calling a 'wand'. Such lectures, on subjects ranging from Greek mythology to the Basin of the Mississippi, were only enlivened for us by joyful moments when a slide was put in upside down or when the co-operation between the lecturer and the operator broke down completely and gave place to a certain amount of far from academic argument. One has often seen a beautiful selection of slides absolutely ruined for an audience by the clumsy way in which they were presented by both operator and lecturer.

But one can also call to mind occasions when the lantern was handled as it should be. In a converted stable, for instance, at the rear of one of those houses occupied in its palmy days by one of the merchant princes of the Bute Dock. It was a Sunday evening and at eight o'clock the doors were thrown open and a motley throng of young and old, white and coloured, and those whose nationalities were so diverse that the leaders had long become accustomed to dividing the whole party broadly on a colour basis of black, white and khaki, surged into a long, low, narrow room and took up all the available space, even hanging along the beams. The lecture was in the capable and deft hands of a sailor, an old ship's captain, a man extremely popular in the coloured quarter of the town because of the ardent fight he had put up for the coloured sailor's rights in the years of the depression. His subject was sailing ships, and he told his audience of the time within his memory when the dock basin within a stone's throw of where they were sitting had been crowded with sailing ships. He showed them pictures of the sailing ship that even then (1936) came yearly to dock in the port. He showed them big ships and small ships, explained about 'three sheets in the wind' and enlivened his tales of the construction of various parts of the ship with jokes and adventures which he had heard or experienced.

The lantern, an expensive but rather ancient one, had been given to the club and this was the first occasion on which it had been used there. Many people within the direct line of fire

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EYES—2

thought idly once or twice that perhaps it was a little smoky, but most of us were used to the rather thick fog which descended on most of the activities in that area after about the first half-hour. It was only fifty minutes later, an astonishingly short fifty minutes, when the lights went up, that we realised that even the lantern in certain circumstances can make brothers of us all, for as we gazed in horror at one another we saw that our former triple classification no longer existed. No longer could the 'khaki' pride himself on the fairer skin which he possessed when he compared himself with his black brother, and no longer were the whites in their erstwhile superior position, since all were fairly and equally coated with black from the lantern!

One calls to mind yet another occasion when the lantern was used with a slickness that would not have disgraced a disciple of Dobson and Young. The scene on this occasion was a large Baptist chapel on a Sunday evening just before Christmas. The minister had discovered that it was possible for him to hire lantern slides dealing with various novels, and as he was running short of lecturers he decided that it would be useful to read through the script provided with the slides. The President of the Sunday School, however, had leanings towards dramatic effects and he had rearranged the script so that it read like a play and coached various members of his senior scholars in the reading. Inevitably, as it was just before Christmas, the choice was *A Christmas Carol*, and the parts were cleverly cast. Each reader was provided with his own adequately shaded light. The person working the lantern *could* work a lantern and the result was an exposition which might have brought tears to the eyes of Dickens himself.

On the whole it is not the lantern and not the slides which are at fault, but the fact that people so often imagine that mechanical aids are something which 'saves you work' instead of something which helps you, if you are willing to work and rehearse, to make a better job of the presentation of your material. Mechanical aids are never really first-class in the hands of those who do not appreciate the paradox of formalised informality.

An interesting scheme, which revealed a technique of in-

struction suited particularly for small isolated units of the Services, was initiated and carried out by Dr. Pilkington in the Cambridge area during the war years. He assembled a portable lantern and screen together with small 2-inch by 2-inch slides which were easy to transport and suitable for showing in small rooms. He had prepared a generous supply of material, classified into various groups of about twenty slides under such headings as 'Wild Flowers', 'Biblical Quotations', 'Scientific Apparatus', 'Prominent Personages', 'Queer Customs'. The method adopted was to divide the audience into two teams. The pictures were then thrown on the screen and the audience invited to supply the title or the identification or literary allusion. The team which scored the greatest number of correct answers won a prize, and all disputes as to the scores were prevented by handing out a card to the leader of the team which gave the correct answer first. In a sense the whole scheme is rather like a pictorial general knowledge test, or a visual quiz, but in Dr. Pilkington's experience he seldom failed to find among his varied audiences someone who was a specialist on one or other of the types of pictures shown on the screen. He said that in this way he himself obtained a great deal of new and specialised additional knowledge from many of his audiences. The method is capable of a great deal of development in various ways. Obviously one of its most valuable assets is that it breaks down any class room atmosphere, stimulates observation and makes many people articulate who would never join in any other type of discussion.

One can quite see that it would only be useful as an introduction to various subjects or as an occasional method of instruction. Dr. Pilkington himself generally used a series made up of about twenty slides to cover an hour, since a great deal of discussion followed on certain of the slides each time, but it would certainly be a help to numbers of people who find themselves left far behind when more formal methods of discussion are used.

Unfortunately there are many who feel that such schemes as these are a little childish. There are still numbers of people who are afraid of visual education as though it were something quite new and therefore quite naturally suspect. Yet, when all



is said and done, the most powerful aid to any form of education is the recording of experience. In one sense education can really be regarded as the impact of the experienced mind on the less experienced mind, and for this purpose the more experience that is recorded the better. In the early days experience could only be recorded through the written word; and the invention of printing, multiplying as it did the amount of recording that could be done, was the first great step in the direction of universal education. One cannot conceive the possibility of universal education in an age when all books were hand-written. The invention of photography was an additional aid to this recording, not only of experience, but of observation, and surely the methods of mechanical projection—ciné photography in all its forms—are merely a further extension of recording both experience and observation for the benefit of many more people.

Nevertheless, lantern slides have many disadvantages, and it is probably true that the slide will be superseded in the future by the film strip. This is a length of film on which are printed anything from twelve to sixty pictures, so that in the matter of sheer weight and therefore convenience, and saving of postage, it is an advance on the lantern. Moreover the projector needed is fairly cheap and can be run off an accumulator if necessary, as it only needs a 12-volt lamp. Unfortunately, up to date there has been a great shortage of film-strip projectors, but this is rapidly being righted, and there seems no reason why every organisation dealing with informal education should not eventually possess a projector for this purpose.

Again, a vast library of material is being gathered together, and the whole joy of the film strip is that it will be possible to show it in a room that is not completely blacked out, and also to use it as an extra aid or instructor for the the teaching of craft work and other manual processes. For instance, there are already in existence numbers of film strips issued by Dryad dealing with various crafts. A most useful one has been made on 'How to Darn a Sock', for example, and the great advantage of these is that the learner can put in the strip over and over again, and stop it at will until he has mastered the process.

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EYES—2

Moreover, it is possible to use the film strip in a very much more intimate manner. By the provision of a small plastic instrument, rather like a pair of opera-glasses, which should cost about sixpence to produce commercially, it is possible for people to use the film strip individually either for learning a craft or for looking at the 'pictures' after a talk is over.

Such a method is particularly valuable in connection with showing pictures of houses, furniture and scenery in other countries. It is especially successful with young people, who are often inclined to look at ordinary visual material which is passed round in rather a superficial manner, but who, if they have a gadget of their own which they themselves can work, are inclined to take very much more notice of the pictures. For instance, in a set of one hundred film strips dealing with various aspects of life in Canada and the United States, many a group of young people will insist on working through at least half of them if they can use the instrument themselves, and it is easy to imagine how very much more thoroughly a process or a craft would be observed and noted. It is clear that the film strip is a valuable aid to the arm-chair traveller, the arm-chair architect and the arm-chair scientist.

Another discovery in the use of the film strip in informal education is that many a group, stimulated by seeing other strips, has been encouraged to make its own film strips on camping holidays, of places visited, or other subjects in which the group is interested. During the war years such adventures were hampered by lack of film, but there is no reason why the programme of many photographic societies should not in the future include the making of strips for their own delight and for the use of any other study group. The process is neither expensive, nor too difficult, though it calls for those qualities of patience and accuracy which are found in many adolescents, particularly those who are somewhat solitary in their habits and scientific in their tastes.

The teaching film and the film strip are really visual aids to education—rather than visual education. Like the blackboard, the film strip and the teaching film give the teacher an additional tool which he can use to make his task of interpretation easier, quicker and more vivid. The teaching film is therefore

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EYES—2

short; it seldom runs for more than five minutes, and at its best confines itself to demonstrating material in which an observation of movement is essential to full understanding. Such films are concerned with specialised needs, and the film strip which has all the advantages of the lantern slide with none of its corresponding disadvantages can give a yet more detailed presentation of the subject with which it is dealing. The teaching film, therefore, and the film strip are for the most part the tools—the extraordinarily vivid and almost essential tools—of certain study groups.

The value of this technique of teaching processes through the film was proved over and over again during the war years. By the use of the film strip and the teaching film, factory workers during the pressure of the war years received careful and accurate instruction on the handling of machinery. Land-girls were given instruction on how to plough a field and allotment holders and farmers were given up-to-date information on new tools, new methods and new plans. National Fire Service and Civil Defence workers were also instructed by this means. It is quite obvious that such a method of instruction by films is capable of infinite expansion and that every variety of specialised need and interest could be served in this way, from the interests of the rose grower to those of the anaesthetist, from those who wish to master the intricacies of a craft or hobby to those who have a professional interest in the latest treatment for scabies.

For the purpose of social education, however, which is the first step which most attempts at further education must take, the background film, the documentary and the commercial film are of more immediate importance.

The background film is longer than the teaching film. Running as it does for about 12–20 minutes it provides instruction at the level of both fact and idea. The background film may be silent or sound, but it seldom has very much commentary since it is designed to be used with the type of teacher who is perfectly capable of supplying his own explanations. This is a very valuable adjunct to the study group, but here again we have a visual aid to education rather than visual education.

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EYES—2

The documentary and the commercial film are in a different category altogether, and none of us can claim that either type of film is new to us. During the war years Food and Fuel Flashes in the commercial cinema have accustomed the housewife to many educational household hints and information. The vast public services of blood transfusion and diphtheria immunisation have been made matters of public information through the film. That these films have their effect can be factually proven, but perhaps one rather amusing example will suffice. Do you remember the 'flashes' that asked us to be more careful about throwing away lighted cigarettes? One eager member of a fire brigade was heard to complain bitterly that this film had made life very dull for him since there were far fewer 'decent fires' now than there used to be! It is indeed a fact that the number of outbreaks of fire caused in this way has been definitely reduced by bringing home the dangers in dramatic form to the receptive cinema audience.

A consideration of every type of film, including even the commercial film, brings one to the realisation that it is the documentary alone that has achieved any continuity of purpose and achievement. This type has been defined by John Grierson as a film which makes a 'creative interpretation of actuality'. The documentary film makers were helped from the outset by the fact that they were working to satisfy a known and clearly defined need for information of some kind or another. The documentary provided the Government with a vivid and universally acceptable medium of interpretation, and it is therefore not surprising that it has been able to 'bring alive' the principles and fundamentals of democratic living.

In this connection it is interesting to observe that from its very inception the documentary film was sponsored by the Government. It was the Empire Marketing Board and later the General Post Office which first subsidised the 'information film' and later national industries and public utility services like Gas, Oil and Coal and Imperial Airways adopted the same policy. Almost simultaneously national societies, the Land Settlement Association, the National Council of Social

Service and others, embarked on film making as a means of establishing relations with the public. During the war, of course, the scope and scale of the documentary widened out of all recognition and the Ministry of Information film service has a fine record of enterprise and imagination, not only in the matter of making films for educational purposes and for maintaining morale, but also in the matter of the actual arrangements for showing such films, through the commercial cinema as well as at meetings in public libraries, Women's Institute gatherings, village halls, Youth centres and the like.

It is important to realise, however, that these films are subsidised, that cinema exhibitors pay very small rentals for them and that by and large this great educational service is run at a loss. Whether one should ever expect an educational service to pay for itself is another matter. The important point to remember is that any activity which is subsidised is bound to be conditioned by the views of the subsidisers. The man who pays the piper calls the tune.

The documentary has however breathed new life into the sick body of adult education, and by relating information to everyday life in a dramatic fashion it has become a force to be reckoned with in any consideration of further education. The Films Division of the Ministry of Information gave us a new education service which it is estimated reached an audience of 200 million a year, apart from the audience which saw such feature-length documentaries as *Desert Victory*, *Target for Tonight* and the various film 'flashes' at the commercial cinema.

The Government has thus become an important maker and distributor of documentary, educational and information films of all kinds, it has at its service a large array of skilled technicians and it is not concerned with profit. The problem is that of ensuring the continuance of such a public service on a basis which shall ensure its high standard and maintain an integrity of purpose and content, so that it can never fall from its high place as an educational service to the level of servility too frequently associated with any type of vested interest.



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EYES—2

This, however, is a problem which will have to be thrashed out at the highest levels, though a democracy cannot afford to be unaware of it. What concerns those who venture into the field of further education through the eyes is how to *use* the vast quantity of material which is at present available as 16-mm. documentary and educational film; an amount which will be enormously increased in the future, since to take two producers alone, Metro-Goldwyn Mayer, the leading American company, have added a 16-mm. division to their overseas marketing agency, and Mr. A. J. Rank, who already dominates British production of both films and projectors, is also planning to enter this field.

How does one in fact use the educational and documentary film? Actually the use of the educational film in adult and youth groups is severely hampered through lack of equipment and by reason of the expense of hiring it. The result is that only too often the educational film is misused in clubs and community centres, and indeed all groups endeavouring to do a little informal education through the film, because too much is attempted on each given occasion. The reason is one which commands our sympathy. In an effort to reduce costs and organisation, one is sorely tempted to indulge in a 'film evening'. The only really profitable way to use educational films is to choose one subject and concentrate on films dealing with that subject alone at each session. Unfortunately, alas, if one has to hire a projector and the operator who goes with it, and hire films and arrange for a suitable room to be free for the show, one 'uses' the projector and the projectionist for as long as possible and gets through as much as possible in one fell swoop. The result is two or three hours of educational film after educational film, and those who stay to the end are usually those who do not seem to mind suffering from mental indigestion, or those who are too half-witted to get up and go out in the middle, or too lethargic to create a diversionary row in the back of the hall.

Properly treated, the information film, whether one calls it educational or documentary, *must* be used to illustrate one topic at a time. Supposing for the sake of argument that the

topic is housing, the best plan is to show two, or at the most three films on housing. Time should then be allowed for discussion, and then the films should be shown again in order to check up on one's own discussion. It is perfectly permissible, of course, to combine two films on housing and then to show as a slight variation on the theme a film like *Children of the City* which, although it deals with juvenile delinquency, nevertheless gives a great deal of time to an exposition of the influence of environment on delinquency. But no other films should be shown that evening.

The whole point of the information film is to help people to become educated, and not even the cleverest among us is capable of sitting through a two and a half hours' programme which races us through the work of the G.P.O., trawler fishing, harvesting on the prairie, the Red Army (which incidentally is a film about ants, not what you might think), an impassioned appeal to form a Savings Group and Dirty Bertie (a cartoon pointing out the advantages of washing occasionally). This, believe it or not, was the programme once endured by an audience of two hundred young and old.

It is true that the Ministry of Information had an expensive service for showing films, but this was a 'film showing' service, and valuable as it was there is much to be said for linking documentaries with further education in rather a different fashion. The content of the film and the discussion that follows are valuable, not the length of the film show. Just as no-one would suggest that a great deal could be taught about radio by sending a group to listen-in in village halls and Women's Institutes and Community centres once every six weeks (interesting as that might be), so in helping people to study all the complications of social living what is needed is not only the operator and the film but a band of experts who would use one film at a time to introduce, illustrate or conclude courses of study on the one hand, or to encourage an audience to talk and think about the film itself on the other. This means placing films and film operators at the disposal of groups for shorter periods of time—or else training a large body of people to use film material which they can

hire inexpensively and with which they can roam the country with a 'licence to educate informally' any group which is willing to 'take it' through the film.

If one wishes to master a process by seeing a film, one has to see it several times. Similarly, the value of the documentary is enhanced by an opportunity for guided discussion concerning it. Only thus indeed can we be safeguarded from imagining that the particular documentary we happen to see on any one subject constitutes all that there is to be said on that matter.

How necessary this discussion is, has been proved, to take one example alone, by the various excellent films on housing. All good of their kind, one of them begs us to believe that the garden city is the only way of life, another that the flat is the answer to every housewife's prayer, and so on and so on.

A piece of advice which cannot be safely ignored by any teacher or lecturer who wants to bring his points home is, 'Say what you are going to say, then say it, and then say what you have said'. (The more skilful you are at disguising this repetition the better, of course.) It is a piece of advice which must not continue to be ignored by those who use the film as a medium of education. It is necessary to see the film—to talk about the film—and then to see the film again. This is also one of the most profitable ways of using the good commercial film. No-one thinks it odd to see the same play more than once; and many commercial films are every bit as worth while seeing again.

No system of further education can afford to ignore the commercial film. Cinema going has become the main leisure-time pursuit of millions of people of both sexes, of all ages and of every variety of trade, profession and economic circumstances. It is estimated that 25 million attendances are made weekly to cinemas in this country alone, which probably means that at least 12 million people go to the cinema at least once a week, a figure which is undoubtedly far in excess of those who read a book a week. It is surely indisputable that a method of spending one's leisure hours which is so popular is obviously catering for some hitherto unsatisfied

human need. Whether one diagnoses it as a purely emotional need or not, does not materially affect the issue. It is also very clear that a mode of entertainment that is so widely patronised must have a powerful effect on man's thoughts, man's opinions, man's standards and values—that the film, in fact, has a high educative value.

Yet the attitude of large numbers of educationists towards the film is very largely negative. To quote from *Film and National Life*: 'cinematography in Great Britain has endured the neglect and scorn of those who conduct the education of the young'; and if one can judge from the frequent correspondence in various educational journals, together with other statements in the press and in lecture halls and conferences, the position has not much improved in the last ten years or so. Even among those who are ready to admit that there is something to be said for the educational film, there is still a large body of opinion which seems to feel that there is nothing whatsoever to be said for the commercial film. The harsh fact is, however, that much as one may welcome the increased care and attention that is being paid to the educational film, to the documentary film, to the use of films in teaching such subjects as geography or science, most people receive their film education through the commercial film.

The fact that people are, and will be, educated by the film is incontrovertible. It follows, therefore, that unless this is to be a rather dangerous tool in the hands of those who care to get control of the industry, people should be educated *for* the film. Education by the film is not at all the same thing as the educational film. The commercial film, no matter what the subject or the story, makes definite contributions to the knowledge of the audience, or at least to their opinions, by the implicit statements and actions of the film stars, by their attitudes towards people, by their behaviour, by the standards which they accept or reject, by their very portrayal of life in different circumstances, in different economic levels and different countries. The documentary and educational film, on the other hand, makes explicit statements and give direct information on certain topics, though there again the total effect is bound to be influenced by the 'message' they

are designed to get across, and their value therefore is dependent on the integrity with which the information is handled. It should not be imagined that it is less possible to condition people's thoughts by this medium than it is possible, for example, to condition people's thought by the writing of history which is based upon the desire to prove any particular interpretation of events or philosophy of history.

It is desperately important, therefore, that when the Government and the financial magnate become interested in the film the public should be urged to think, and think very hard, and that those interested in education, rather than propaganda, should encourage them to go on thinking. There are indications that in the very near future much more attention will be paid to the political implications of the film. Just before the General Election a letter appeared in *The Times* in which the writer objected very strongly to the display in a news theatre of a pictorial review devoted to the activities of a private member of Parliament. The writer suggested that the film would have been more fittingly displayed in the member's constituency—but 'possibly this would involve the cost of the production being charged to the honourable gentleman's election expenses'. Astonishingly enough there was no follow-up of this correspondence. Yet it should surely be unnecessary to point out that if it was right and proper that the amount of time to be devoted to the various political parties should be rationed out by the radio on some sort of rough and ready basis of fair play, it is also necessary that we should look very closely at the situation which may arise in a democracy if certain politicians can make themselves known through the film while others cannot.

The high propaganda value of the film has been proved beyond all possible doubt in the war years by every nation; hence the importance of 'control' from the point of view of the politician, and indeed from the point of view of every type of vested interest. One wonders whether, however much confidence one may have in the good sense of the man in the street, there has not been set on foot already a vast amount of control of which he is, alas, unaware and which,



if he does not become alive to it, may be found too firmly established in the seat of power for him to do very much about it without a major upheaval. It is quite obvious that there must be some control, so that nothing is presented which offends the moral conventions of the day. It is equally obvious that there should be some control of the type of films exported as giving the country's views and artistic standards, to ensure that they are worthy of that country. It would be a thousand pities if any films should be used, or boycotted, however, by factions within the State, whether those factions are political, religious, artistic or economic. It is already a great deal easier to boycott a film than it is to boycott a book, and no amount of assertion that it is for the people's good can nullify the fact that despotism, no matter how benevolent, is still despotism.

The object of education in any medium is to stimulate people to think, not to dictate the content of their thought. It is in that direction that Nazism and Fascism proceed. Everyone, even the most dyed-in-the-wool little Nazi or Fascist, had freedom to make up his own mind—no-one can take that freedom from any human being. But what one loses under dictatorship, under controls, under propaganda, is the freedom of access to all the facts *before* making up one's mind. Everyone must develop in sheer self-defence a certain proportion of awareness of what the film is trying to do to him personally, and what he will allow it to sell him as ideas and ideals. The time, indeed, has already come when all organisations interested in education should treat films at least as carefully as they would treat any transaction dealing with money, since just as money is the most popular method of exchanging material goods, so the film has become the most popular method of exchanging emotional and mental goods.

But before considering how this can be done it might be worth while asking what the cinema does for all those people who attend every week, since only in discussing what contribution it makes to life generally can one either combat the ill effects on the one hand, or benefit from the good effects on the other.

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EYES—2

It would be unwise to underestimate the physical satisfaction afforded by the cinema. It is the one place where the busy housewife can be certain of having a comfortable arm-chair to herself for a period of two to three hours without any interruption. It is one of the few places where the young can go and relax—even sprawl—without being conscious of any form of adult supervision or disapproval. It is one of the few places where the lonely and the shy can sit in comfort without being made aware of their lack of social poise or loneliness, one of the few places where mothers and fathers can take the whole family without the risk that sooner or later some member of the family will make them embarrassingly conspicuous. It is one of the few places where young couples can sit together undisturbed and not spied upon. It is one of the few places—apart from bed—where one can go to sleep without hurting anyone's feelings.

Moreover, cinemas on the whole, besides giving one a comfortable arm-chair to sit in, are well heated, so that one need not receive either one's entertainment or one's education in the howling draught which passes for fresh air in so many other educational establishments. Again the lighting is certain, that is to say, when it is dark it is quite dark, and when it is light the lighting is not merely a matter of 'darkness visible'. Furthermore, if one goes to the cinema one knows exactly how far one has committed oneself. The payment of one's seating fee entitles one to remain there undisturbed for the length of the programme, or even longer if one has no conscience, and there is no obligation, moral or otherwise, to come again another time, or to undertake any homework, or to make any enrolment, or to pay a subscription to anything, or to join the working party, or to be friends with the people in the row in front, or on either side of you.

Secondly, the commercial film makes a definite contribution to one's emotional life. It is sheer nonsense to say that the hundreds and thousands of reasonable human beings who go to the cinema each week become nothing but receptive sponges from the moment that they are confronted by the silver screen until they leave their seats, when presumably they wring themselves out and become sensible again. It is

true that the film may be used as a method of escaping from many of the problems of modern life, but we all escape. Amid all the complications of the modern world, everyone, however highly educated, must escape from time to time if he is to remain sane. Moreover, it has yet to be proved that the person escaping through the commercial film is doing any more damage to his mind and his emotions, or is any less socially desirable, than the person who escapes through reading a detective novel, a blood or a book of poetry. Indeed, it might be argued that if one has to choose whether one will escape through the avenue of a cataclysmic emotional experience by way of the film or by way of a novel, the film might be the less harmful of the two, since it lasts for less time, and it is fairly certain that the experience will not be repeated. It is impossible, for instance, to turn up the more unpleasant parts time after time, as it is if one is reading a harmful book, and though it is possible to see the film several times, the odds are heavily against seeing it much more than seven times, whereas there are no limits to the number of times a book may be dipped into.

Because we have not really done more than tackle the fringe of emotional education in this country as yet, and because we are a nation that is inarticulate emotionally, the film ranks very high as a method of providing emotional release and has a high value as emotional education. Quite apart from the fact that the film helps to give release from emotional tension and shows personal problems in a form in which one is willing to accept them, it helps people to become emotionally articulate even if it causes them to express these emotions from time to time in the exaggerated speech or song of the film star. One of the most astonishing features of the war years was the enormous radio popularity of Vera Lynn and other 'Forces' sweethearts'. One felt that the whole thing must be a put-up job. This, however, is far from the truth; the simple fact is that so many husbands and wives, engaged couples, and lovers are emotionally inarticulate when together, and are still more incapable of expressing themselves in writing when they are apart. Since they find themselves incapable of writing anything but phrases of the

'love-and-kisses-cheerio-and-take-care-of-yourself' type, a song of the kind sung by one of the Forces' sweethearts or a film star gives them a wider range of expression. Words are the only messengers we prisoners of life can send each other and if we are inarticulate we are prisoners in solitary confinement indeed. What is true of the song (however much it may offend the more articulate among us) is just as true of the film. It gives people a certain limited amount of emotional currency, it gives them an opportunity to reassure themselves of the fact that love is not a bad thing, to recognise that 'it is difficult for them the same as for us' (one of the chief reasons for the popularity of *This Happy Breed*). It puts into words, stories and pictures the major problems of everyday life—the difficulties attendant upon obtaining money, securing promotion or running a small business; the difficulties of feeling that one doesn't really belong or that one is misunderstood; the difficulties of managing a successful relationship with those one loves. It provides general relief from the monotony which is attendant upon a great deal of the work we all have to do. All these are ironed out for us in the film and so it gives comfort and release. From time to time, it even seems to give us the beginnings of an answer to the eternal problem, 'What is it all for?'

A great deal of this emotional release is the result of one's self-identification with the film. This self-identification with the hero or heroine is no worse than self-identification with characters in the novel or in the stage play. Anything which enriches life momentarily can be valuable.

The popular entertainment of any age has always been blamed for the vices of the time. Bear-baiting, cock fighting, card-playing, race going (even tea-drinking was castigated by Wesley)—have all in turn been blamed for the increase in juvenile delinquency or whatever pet delinquency there happened to be in the age under review.

An indignant writer in 1860 said: 'The music hall is at present so constituted that it can have no effect but that of corruption.' In those days it was the music hall which was popularly known as the flea-pit, the dustbin or the spittoon. Now we recognise the cinema under that guise. Youth has,

indeed, always been going to the dogs, closely followed, apparently, by his elders. Yet in all the reputable and scientific enquiries that have been made into the effect of cinema going and delinquency, it has been found that there has been no direct connection between the two. Professor Cyril Burt's great work traces no connection between cinema going and the delinquent girl, and in only 0.2 per cent of the boys was there any traceable connection between cinema going and delinquency. The Oldham Report made an equally careful study of the possible effect of cinema going and found no evidence of any effective significance. Perhaps it is all a little like the age-old problem of which came first, the chicken or the egg. Do people become delinquent as a result of what they learn at the cinema, or does the cinema attract the delinquent who is, as a rule, antisocial to begin with? Perhaps the delinquent, like so many others, frequents the cinema because he has been made desperate by neglect. Many probation officers would assert that the girl who is over-apt to indulge in some form of phantasy life is encouraged to think that her dreams may be fulfilled, and is inclined to overestimate the importance of pretty clothes and all that she imagines goes with a good time. The fact remains that there is no scientific proof of this.

In any case, it is not only the cinema-minded girl who makes the mistake of thinking that happiness is something which one finds rather than something one works for. Most people seem to think they will find it one day—but even a tin of baked beans cannot be enjoyed without the labour of opening the tin. After all, throughout life we identify ourselves with our best selves, with our super-ego as the psychologist puts it. The man who apologises for his game of golf or tennis, by explaining over and over again that he is not on top of his form, is apologising to his super-ego or his phantasy of himself. The club leader who apologises for the club (which one invariably visits on the wrong night) is apologising to his ideal, or phantasy conception if you like it, of his club. Everyone has his own picture of himself and of his own achievement and interests, his own phantasy. If we did not have this vision, few of us would have courage



to carry on for very long, but it is only momentarily that one is carried away by these phantasies. Those who see immense evil and harm in all these things forget the vast store of average common sense which is the most invaluable possession of ordinary people. No matter how romantic the adolescent girl, she knows very well that the man she marries will probably *not* be like Charles Boyer, however much she enjoys his love-making on the screen. If you suggested to her that her own young man might be like that she would only retort: 'Don't be so daft!' or whatever is the local idiom for that retort. On the other hand the desire to have a baby 'like the one in the pictures' has sent many an ordinary young woman to the ante-natal clinic.

As for the gangster film, on the whole it is the detective, the G.I. man, and the police who are the heroes of such films, and not the criminal; and if anyone would learn how to do a spot of house-breaking or how to pick a lock, the film is most certainly not the best method of gaining such information, since the speed is too great to admit of the careful study of the methods used. Moreover, one of the perhaps few, but great, advantages of seeing so many American films in England is that since the gangster with his tommy-gun and high-powered car lives and works in a society utterly strange to the English boy and girl, they do not as a rule consider it either possible or practicable to translate such goings-on into the English social system. The popularity of crime films, like the popularity of detective fiction, is probably chiefly attributable to the opportunity that they afford of working these things out of one's system through phantasy rather than through real life. The average adolescent, indeed, often asserts that one of the chief attractions of the crime film and the detective film is that it shows that 'crime does not pay', that the criminal 'should be helped and not blamed' (a lesson which one could wish that all adults had learned) and that 'wrong doing is a matter of education after all'.

The highest incidence of the reading and the purchasing of detective fiction is among the clergy, but no-one would therefore suggest that they are more apt to commit criminal offences than the rest of us. It might indeed be possible to

argue that the knowledge of the criminal that they gain in this way has some bearing on their work, and that an indulgence in a phantasy life of crime helps them to be good in their workaday world!

Furthermore, although there is much to be said for cinema going at the physical and emotional level of satisfaction, when the film deals with real life and all its problems without resigning itself to sentiment, when it deals with real humour without descending to crudity, when it deals with real sorrow not making a mountain out of a molehill that isn't really there, when, in fact, the film deals sincerely with first-hand emotions instead of sloppily with second-hand emotions, the film is first-class education as well as entertainment. The only sin in the film as elsewhere is to put up with the second-rate while pretending that it is first-rate, and one must always remember in its favour that up to the present at all events it is the one major art that isn't self-conscious or 'precious'. Art makes life tolerable, and the film, when it deals with real everyday problems, coloured with romance, garnished with adventure, sprinkled with idealism and served with taste, makes life tolerable for millions. It is a tribute to the innate honesty and good sense of the public generally that the commercial films which have been most widely popular have always been those which possess most of these qualities to a very high degree. It would be an overstatement to say that the public has *demand*ed better films, but it is certainly true to say that they have proved themselves capable of 'taking' the very best that has been offered to them and that what they like best has always been what is, in fact, best. One must never forget that the film is an industry and a trade as well as an art, but that too need be no disadvantage. However, most of us have our own private snobbishness and, as far as the arts are concerned, those that pay are still as suspect, as in Victorian times was he who aspired to be a gentleman though still 'in trade'.

Through film-going everyone can enlarge the content of his mind. One can travel by proxy, one can make excursions into realms of sociology and obtain a clearer understanding of how people live and how people react to various situations.

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EYES—2

One can obtain information which may improve one's manners or one's taste in dress. One can obtain additional information incidentally as well as directly through the news-reel, the feature films and the documentaries; and, after all, this incidental education is one of the most important factors in the content of the mind. To a very great extent education is what is left after you have forgotten all the things you have ever learned; and in a rapidly changing society a method of quick and constant review of the world as it is, and the world as it might be, is a valuable contribution to one's education. It would probably be fair to say that the average adult's views on a large number of subjects is the result of this incidental education through the films. It has curious drawbacks, of course. Probably the average estimation of Russian women is equally divided between those who think of them as earnest, rather hard and very talkative young women of the Greta Garbo type, or as the merry, dancing and singing, but also very talkative peasant type. The popular estimate of the Austrian is coloured by the fact that most Austrians seem to make love beautifully and are assisted in the pleasant task by a number of romantic waltz tunes, while unless he has taken the opportunity with which the war years have provided us to get to know the Americans, the average man's incidental information about them is almost inevitably a curious blend of reflections concerned with the incredible number of men who seem to wear tommy-guns, and the fact that they all seem to go to high school, which they leave in white night-dresses after a ceremony called 'graduation'.

It follows, therefore, that any film which does not possess integrity, a sense of social awareness, some psychological insight into human behaviour and good craftsmanship, may do immense and lasting harm. This is why the question of content and integrity is so desperately important and the reason why people should be educated *for* the films as well as *by* them.

But how can we help people in this way? Possibly the first and the best method is the simple one, as it nearly always is; the simple one of going to see films. After all, the way

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EYES—2

to appreciate music is to listen to music, and the way to appreciate dancing is to dance (not to go and watch the ballet, although that may come later). And just as one is helped in the early days of listening to music if one is guided by someone who has a more trained ear, so in seeing films one can train one's own eye more quickly if one has the guidance of those who have trained eyes. Fortunately the eye is not so difficult to train as the ear.

One could wish that every group concerned with informal education, whether among young or old, would deliberately make up parties to go to the films just as school parties are made up to go to the theatre. By this method the very first step towards being educated for the film is achieved—the step of selection. If there is a party-visit to a film, whether once a week or once a month, the film has to be deliberately chosen. This in itself entails a certain amount of discussion and a certain consideration of the possible content of films and it may even lead to a consideration of the radio reviews or newspaper criticisms of the films.

The next stage leads quite easily from this. If film going is a group activity, it is obvious that it will be talked over afterwards and it is in this discussion that one is educated for the film. Moreover, although one chooses one's film deliberately in this way, there is no need for it to be a very important film. In the early stages particularly, it is necessary that it shall be something from which the majority of the group at all events can be guaranteed to obtain a certain amount of enjoyment. A film is not necessarily the worse because it features popular film stars, any more than Shakespeare is the worse for being played by eminent actors and actresses, nor is it necessarily the worse because it is funny. What matters is the talk afterwards. At the outset, however, the discussion afterwards may be rather disappointing. One is constantly being told that people, particularly young people, who go to the films are incapable of telling the story afterwards, that they can merely discuss the stars and their dresses. But even on that level the discussion has value if it helps people to be more articulate, and it is usually possible to direct the conversation into other channels by throwing some

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EYES—2

provocative statements about the film into the pool. There are, indeed, about a dozen questions which can be worked through quite systematically if one is in doubt as to 'where one goes from here'.

In the first place, was it a *good* story? A much easier question to answer than what *was* the story? If it wasn't a good story, why wasn't it? What was wrong with it? Having decided on the merits of the story, what about the acting? Was the acting good, and if not, why was it not good? A question which frequently leads to a discussion of character and types, since quite often one of the real reasons why the acting does not seem good is that the story is wrong for that particular type of character. If there is nothing much to say about the acting, or even if there is, one can then proceed to considering the photography, the scenery and the music. It is often a little difficult for those who know little about film photography to discuss this very profitably. In the beginning perhaps the only thing one can do is to discuss which shots one liked best. But even getting thus far is a help since an awakened interest in film photography often leads people to try to read up a little about the whole technique. Actually as far as the young adult is concerned quite often a surprising knowledge of film photography is in fact displayed by one or two of the members.

One is thus ready to go on to the question of the film as a whole. Taking the film as a whole, which parts did you enjoy best and why? Next, if it was funny or if it was sad, what made it so?

Then having devoted five very simple questions to appreciation one can proceed to a certain amount of judgement and appraisal. Was there anything in the film which seemed wrong—wrong because it was untrue to life or untrue to the characters in the story? Was there anything that was particularly helpful in the story—helpful, that is to say, to those of us who saw it, either because it made some contribution to our knowledge or to our understanding? Incidentally, such a question is far better phrased: 'Did you find anything helpful?' rather than: 'Did you learn anything from it?' One has to be extremely careful in all this matter of film appreciation



that we shall not give people the impression that the film is yet another thing which is about to be used for 'writing notes or essays on'. Next comes what is perhaps one of the most fruitful topics for discussion in film groups: 'Did it show how other people lived and what sort of people they were? How much do you think you would have to earn to live in the way those people lived, and did you really approve of the way in which they lived? Given that sort of situation, would you really have behaved in the way in which the film caused the characters to behave?' This, together with the rather searching question 'Would you like an imaginative child to see this film, and if not, why not?' brings one almost inevitably to a consideration of standards and values generally.

One can then consider the film from a rather different angle. What was the main theme? Quite a number of the films which have been shown in the last two or three years can be classified under various themes, as we shall see later. Having discovered what the main theme is, does the group on the whole think that it was given fair and unbiassed treatment, and if it *was* propaganda what was it propaganda *for*? Having considered that, the next question is, 'How could it have been improved, what improvements would you yourself have made, given to that story or to those actors?' Again, did it deal with definite social problems such as housing or education? Then, to lighten the discussion a little, 'Did you think there were any particularly amusing wisecracks in it? Were there any particularly interesting conversations, or sad conversations, and can you remember any of the exact phrases?' When one starts this, people often do not remember these amusing remarks, but, after a film group has been in existence for a little while, it is quite surprising to find how at least one or two people will develop quite a memory for interesting oddments of conversation. If the film group keeps a record of its discussion meetings, it is often quite a worthwhile thing to insert some of these wisecracks, or even better, it is well worth keeping a film logbook in which criticisms of the film, the members' own reactions to the film, wisecracks, portraits of the various stars appearing in the film,

and so on, are inserted. The educational value of the log-book on any subject cannot be overestimated and many a youth group which has begun with a simple logbook on films has made a collection of most interesting and valuable material on a number of subjects. It may be objected by the purists that young people are already 'talking enough American' without being encouraged to collect wisecracks. But the smart saying, the clever repartee, is not invariably American—and an appreciation of the telling phrase is an essential element in that feeling for words and love of words which is the beginning of literary appreciation. Shakespeare is full of wisecracks, so is Shaw, so is Oscar Wilde. A generation which appreciates the Itma broadcasts is a generation which has squeezed the essence of comedy out of the judicious use of catch-phrases and out of keeping even a platitude in currency. Such people are already aware of the fact that words can be precious playthings, and deserve to be encouraged to appreciate not only the comedy of the catch-phrase, but the wit of the wisecrack.

Finally, when all this has been considered, was the film worth seeing? If it was, it might be worth while finding out who the director was, where it was filmed and so on, so that the group can make sure of seeing other films by these same people on another occasion.

When once people have become articulate along these rather simple lines it is possible to indulge in a different approach. From considering the film itself one can consider the place in which one sees the film. 'Have you a favourite cinema?' 'Do you always go to the same cinema? If so, why?' 'Do you like the look of it from the outside or from the inside?' 'Is it comfortable? Do you approve of the colour, the heating arrangements or the cleanliness or the prices?' There is a vast field for discussion in the apparently simple matter of prices which opens up the whole question of entertainment tax, and all the laws governing entertainment and kindred matters. 'What, if anything, are the cloakrooms like?' This is usually a point at which it is a good idea to introduce the cinema manager, the usherette and the operator to the club to tell their story.

Another line of approach is the actual times at which cinemas are open. 'Should they be open on Sundays? If so, should the times be different from week-days? What about the whole question of children going to the cinema? In all these matters it is wise to insist that the would-be reformer carries his reforms to their logical conclusion. It is easy to say airily for example that children under fourteen should only go to the cinema once a week. But how is one going to enforce such a regulation? What is it going to mean in the matter of checking up?—in the matter of family cinema going? Who is going to do it? Who is going to pay for it and is anyone going to lose by it? What would the community be letting itself in for, almost unawares?

A group of young people in Dundee made a suggestion which seems almost fool-proof, but it is for every group to work such questions out for themselves. The consideration of children and cinema going opens up the question of children's films, the question of whether one should have special programmes for children, the question of the quality and content of the existing films for children, and might well include some interesting talks on children's films in other countries. It might, for instance, lead a group to study cinema habits in Soviet Russia, where children under twelve are not admitted after eight o'clock at night. This may seem an excellent plan, but it is as well to point out that since Russian children and Russian parents have no monopoly of saintliness there is often quite a rush of children's bookings at five to eight in the evening, and when one compares the hours at which Russian cinemas and English cinemas close down, one has yet another knotty problem for the consideration of the reformer. What is more valuable is that such a practical question may be the way to introduce young people to Russian films and French films and a study of the cinema art of other countries.

Another line of approach is a consideration of the books that have been filmed. We all know the story of the girl who said: 'No, I never read, because if a book's any use it always makes the grade at the movies.' It is interesting to note how many novels are being filmed, and to make some attempt

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EYES—2

at deciding why this is so. During one recent year for instance, to mention but a few of the most widely advertised 'book films', *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, *Jane Eyre*, *Random Harvest*, *Frenchman's Creek* and *Mrs. Parkington* were all being shown. This question of books and the film will be referred to later under reading, but however much the purists may object to the treatment which certain novels receive at the hands of the scenario writers, one must place on the other side of the account the fact that a number of people are led to read books from having seen a film, and there is no real harm done even if they do so with the remark: 'That was a lovely film; I must read the book to find out what it was all about.' As far as the adolescent is concerned, at all events, a great deal of reading can be encouraged by a study of the book of the film and many a club has acted its own version of a play or a book through seeing it first in the film version.

Much serious study can be encouraged by cashing in on any popular film. Numbers of people feel that 'it is all right if it has been on at the flicks'. What this really means, one supposes, is that 'if it has been on at the flicks it can't be too highbrow'! Whether one regards that as a compliment or otherwise is not the point. The point is that one can just as well roam the whole of the intellectual field from a study of the flicks as from a study of anything else. When one gets particularly high-minded about drama, it is well to remember that many young people never get the chance to see a really good play by a first-class company, but that there are few who cannot see a really good film from time to time. Indeed it is because so many people are unable to see first-class companies perform the great plays of all ages that it is possible to bear with such productions as *Henry V*—a film which, alas, won almost universal acclamation for all the wrong reasons. Because it was Shakespeare and therefore 'literature' and therefore 'intellectual' such a film attracted vast audiences, and the fact that it was a bad film had to be discovered by the victims. It was indeed an interesting experiment, a glorious spectacle—but it was neither Shakespeare, nor a good film, because of its attempt to translate one art in terms of another. Nevertheless it gave those who will perhaps never get a chance

of seeing Shakespeare played, a glimpse of his majesty of thought and word. Even on this count, however, the British Council's two short extracts from *Macbeth* and *Julius Caesar* with such players as Kathleen Nesbitt, Wilfrid Lawson and Felix Aylmer, which were filmed to give overseas audiences a glimpse of British acting, do more to capture the real spirit of Shakespeare than all the riot of Technicolor that was *Henry V*. There are rumours that *Henry V* was a box-office flop in the provinces, and the intelligentzia are not slow in attributing this to a lack of 'soul' in the cinema audience. But the cinema audience has proved itself able to take great art. What it is still gloriously unselfconscious enough *not* to take is artistry pretending to be art.

Many people maintain that they are hampered in their use of the commercial film for study and entertainment because they live in small towns and villages and the 'good' films seldom reach them. This is a difficulty which has to be faced, but which is perhaps much exaggerated. Films *are* generally released eventually, and reach the large provincial towns fairly soon; and although one knows that the smaller cinema in the little country town seems to have a large proportion of 'B' films, none the less the network of Odeons, Gaumonts and so forth is very extensive. It may even mean waiting two or three years to see the film that all London is talking about now, but most of the good stuff does get round the country in time. It means of course that the smaller the place in which one lives the more necessary it becomes to draw up a waiting list of the films most talked about, but this is surely no more difficult than drawing up a waiting list of the books one requires from the library.

One of the main reasons why education is such an exciting adventure is that, whatever one's starting point, one can progress almost infinitely in all directions. For instance, a consideration of the films over almost any given period can give one excellent material for a study of democracy, sociology, psychology, literature and religion.

A great many words are bandied about concerning education for citizenship, but in actual fact citizenship and democracy can be discussed by, with, and through the film, and one



does not need the educational film either. If one takes, for instance, the Capra series of films 'Why we Fight', which gave us *Prelude to War*, *Divide and Conquer*, *The Nazis Strike*, *The Battle of Britain* and *The Battle of Russia*, one has an amazing pattern laid before one of the democratic ideal, quite apart from the brilliant composition and equally brilliant acting which is a feature of all those films. *Prelude to War* alone is one of the most interesting films that a group of democrats could possibly discuss. The story goes right back to the Manchukuo episode, in itself a salutary lesson reminding everyone that the war of 1939 really started long before Great Britain entered it. The whole film is indeed a brilliant piece of propaganda against propaganda, and no-one who presumes to talk about propaganda should be allowed to do so without seeing a film of that kind.

Priestley's *They Came to a City* is probably one of the worst films that ever happened, and will probably go down to history as the film that could not find a cinema—an instance of a bad film rejected for all the wrong reasons, though it is interesting to observe that it was shown very widely in France. It was not a good film. It was not even a very good play. It was indeed an attempt to translate one art medium—the radio—into another art medium; a thing which very seldom works, and which is usually an offence against all artistic canons. Nevertheless, this was a new version of the old theme that democracy is the best policy and for that reason was well worth the consideration of the public in general and the film group in particular. For the purposes of a film discussion group, the bad film is often very much more productive of material than the good one. This, for instance, is an outstanding example of the way in which although art should stretch one's imagination it should never frustrate it. There can be few cinema experiences more maddening than that of sitting for two hours facing an elaborately constructed front door never to be shown a glimpse of what lies within. Most of the characters kept slipping in and out, dropping hints, but not once was one given any satisfactory material to feed the imagination. This in itself leads to a consideration of how much we have a right to demand that the artist should tell us. Why is artistic reticence

stimulating, and when does it become mere futility? Even an imaginative exercise needs a few solid facts on which to work, and a film which expects you to build a New Jerusalem out of something resembling photographs of the stone wall of China and some hard uncomfortable-looking steps is surely not playing fair. It is as bad to give people too little as it is to give them too much, and though the film industry seldom errs in this direction, this particular film might be indicative of a trend. Another very interesting line of thought provoked by this film is the fact that almost for the first time, if not for the very first time, in the history of the commercial film, a leaflet for the use of discussion groups was available.

Up-to-date films on democracy, or with the democratic theme, will often give a film group the urge to see some of the older films dealing with kindred problems. Possibly there is no better picture of local government as it is, rather than local government as it is cracked up to be, than that portrayed in Winifred Holtby's novel *South Riding*, while there is a whole series of documentaries which could be introduced to a film group after having considered the commercial film of the moment on such a theme. Quite an appreciable number of 'classic' commercial films are already available in 16-mm. and can therefore be shown to film groups privately for the purpose of studying either a 'subject' or a film.

There is no subject in which ordinary people are more interested than sociology, only, like the man in the French play who found to his astonishment that he had been talking prose all his life, they too would be on the defensive if anyone accused them of any knowledge of such a high-sounding subject. During one year alone it was possible to consider various aspects of sociology—how people live and how people behave—through some first-class commercial films. Noel Coward's *This Happy Breed* gave an excellent picture of the lives of Mr. and Mrs. Aspidistra between the two wars—their various difficulties and adjustments and personal relationships. The times in which they lived were most sensitively portrayed and the acting of Celia Johnson attained a high level of artistic interpretation. But it would not take any lively film group long to discover that, in spite of everything, one of the major problems

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EYES—2

of Mr. and Mrs. Aspidistra is never mentioned throughout. Such a statement is a challenge to anyone who has seen the film, though the usual experience is that the adult audience does not jump to the answer. The fourteen to twenties are much quicker, but it was left to a Scottish audience to give the right answer the first time!

*Christmas Dinner for a Soldier* and *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* were both, in spite of their many faults, beautiful film studies of human relationships in difficult circumstances. *Waterloo Road* discussed sensitively, with no artistic over-emphasis, the war-time social problem of a young couple whose married life was interrupted before it had had time to grow some of those deep roots which safeguard marriage against the strain of long separations; the problem of living with 'his' parents, the problem of the difficult sister-in-law; the problem of a child—'to have or not to have'. Moreover, if anyone wanted to make a study of the types who frequent the average pin-table saloon or the cinema palais-de-danse without the bother of going there himself, he could do no better, as an introduction at any rate, than to see this film.

*The Way Ahead* gave a sensitive study of five different ways of living at different economic levels and against different backgrounds, and had a wealth of discussion material in it. If a group which had seen *Waterloo Road* and discussed it could then have seen *None but the Lonely Heart*, a most interesting comparative study could have been made. *Waterloo Road* was a genuine study of the London life that is lived behind most of the main line stations; *None but the Lonely Heart* gave us a Hollywood version of the spirit of the East End, and although the film was obviously sincere, as sociology it was ragged in the extreme and even the ranks of the cinema audience itself let alone any practised film group could scarce forbear to jeer when asked to believe that that typical cockney, Ernie Mott, really would say: 'When will the human soul get up off its knees?'

Again, there is a wealth of films which might be an excellent introduction to elementary psychology. Just as it is possible to study any subject by using novels as one's textbooks (provided that one has an expert in charge of the group who has learnt

his subject in other ways), so it is possible to make one's preliminary studies of any subject through the film. It is perhaps unfortunate that up to the present the psychological film, unlike the psychological novel, has been mainly of the 'psychological thriller' class. Even here, however, some interesting material is to be found. A film like *The Guest in the House* dealt with the problem of the woman who turns down a perfectly nice young man in order to steal another woman's husband. The chief character was rather overdrawn, but then it is difficult to portray a neurotic without laying oneself open to the suspicion of exaggeration. It was an interesting study of the way in which a person with terrifying will-power and a whole bundle of repressed emotions can slowly poison the minds of an entire household. Fortunately few of us have to deal with such extreme cases as this, but the film is an excellent starting-off ground for a discussion on how one really does fortify oneself against the emotional parasite. *The Constant Nymph* was an interesting though not great novel, and made, as so often happens, therefore, a less interesting and decidedly less great film, but one which honestly attempted to portray some of the experiences of the adolescent. It is as well from time to time that adults should be reminded of how it is possible to suffer between fourteen and twenty.

In this same category, though far higher up in the list, comes a film like *Lady in the Dark* featuring Ginger Rogers and any good psychiatrist. It is true that by the mercy of providence few psychoanalysts can ever have been faced with a patient who suffered simultaneously from all the complaints in the psychological dictionary. Nevertheless, allowing for the fact that poor Ginger Rogers suffered from everything, and that her unfortunate psychiatrist had to cure everything in two hours, few liberties were taken with the science of psychology beyond that of speeding it up, and the psychologist should be the last to complain since seldom can any branch of science have been handed so many millions of pounds of free advertisement.

Even the detective film will give a film group plenty of material for the study of human beings and might be used to begin a course on elementary law, or law and the adolescent,

or a study of some of the fascinating highways and byways of criminology. It has been said that the civilisation of a country can be assessed by the treatment it metes out to its criminals and an interest in the law and the laws that are made in one's name is no bad thing. Unfortunately, from this point of view, too many of the detective series of commercial films have an American setting. But the whole of the 'Thin Man' series with William Powell, Myrna Loy and her dog were excellent material for the discussion of all sorts of sociological problems, while even *The Man in Half Moon Street* has its points. It might even be a classic example of the type of film which can be introduced by the question, 'What's wrong with . . .?' As a member of the Air Training Corps said: 'Why should there be a local fog in Mayfair and a thunderstorm in the suburbs at the same time?' It might even be worth getting a meteorologist into the discussion group to explain that one!

There is almost no limit to the amount of material for thought and discussion that the film can provide. In a film such as *Rodin* the sculptor's statues are used to tell the story of his artistic development; while the enormous popularity of the Walt Disney films has been one of the most important artistic responses of the age. A study of Disney's work, compared with other cartoon films, followed by a film-group showing of a Lotte Reiniger film such as *The Magic Flute* would be an excellent method of introducing other studies in either art or music.

Music has indeed been well served by the film; the newspaper boy and the milkman have learned to whistle some of the most lovely airs in the world because they have listened to Deanna Durbin. Indeed many a film group has found itself discussing, and even so far forgetting itself as to *buy* gramophone records of many things besides the Warsaw Concerto. Science—'that wife whom it is impossible to live with, and impossible to live without'—has proved just as elusive in the commercial film as elsewhere, but the signs are more hopeful. A beginning has been made with films such as *Madame Curie*, *The Life of Louis Pasteur*, *Penicillin* and the thrilling production *Steel* which is of great social as well as scientific significance showing, as it does, in such dramatic fashion the modern



worker against the background of his work. In a world of the expert few, and the semi-skilled mass, it is an excellent thing for people to see where they themselves fit in, and where they are indebted to the labour of others.

The eternal problem of international relations can be discussed with the aid of a multitude of films, from French to Russian; there are the brilliant little Swiss film of *Marie Louise*, *The True Glory*, *Raiding Berlin* and *Objective Burma* which, though it will be seen no more, is an excellent object lesson in what the public can still do to the powerful cinema magnates if it really cares enough, and in how propaganda can defeat its own ends. Two films such as *I lived in Grosvenor Square* and *The Way to the Stars* form an excellent study on how to promote Anglo-American friendship and how not to do it. From the very moment of its skilful opening in the deserted aerodrome, *The Way to the Stars* does not put a foot wrong in attempting to show the kindred qualities of American and British by emphasising their differences, whereas from the moment it opens the Grosvenor Square film shows the futility of trying to get any sort of relationship into perspective with nothing but a 'sisters under their skin' theme to work on.

Finally, there is no discussion which will not lead eventually to a consideration of the whole question of human beliefs and human faith. On this subject the commercial film in one year alone produced *Song of Bernadette* and *The Keys of the Kingdom*, two films which not only gave one an excellent cry for one's money but which could form the introduction to a series of talks on religious observances and the problem of how to lead a good life. Bernadette takes the path which leads to canonisation; Gregory Peck takes the path which leads him to the mission field. Both stories have within them a wealth of material which might prepare a group to embark on at least a consideration of the motive power of faith in the lives of most people.

Nothing has been said about the various ways in which a film group might like to classify its films—the story film, the documentary, the experimental film (like *Colour* which might almost be called the first 'absolute' film). But all this would require much more time and space. Here we are concerned

with the adventure of approaching education through the film.

Of necessity the very films discussed have had to be those fresh in the mind at the time of writing, and these are only given as an indication of the wealth of material at hand and to illustrate the subjects which the film can help us to make alive for all those groups that meet together so trustingly, so anxious to be fed with information, but equally so anxious not to be bored. Indeed, the formation of a film group studying commercial films alone is ample proof, if such were needed, that most people are capable of absorbing vast quantities of information and digesting and correlating it, provided that it is presented in an entertaining fashion.

Nevertheless, whenever one is deliberately endeavouring to educate people for the film as well as to educate by the film, one must never lose sight of the fact that just as books are entertainment so are films. When dealing with the film, just because it is the least self-conscious of the arts, we must be all the more cautious about impregnating it with too much self-conscious uplift, lest those of us who value it most may do it the supreme injustice of arranging for the film yet another divorce between culture and entertainment.

It would be lamentable if in our efforts to use the film as a tool of education we should create a new subject—the subject of Flickology:

*They say that I must just reject  
The film that is not quite select,  
And that all youngsters we should train  
To shun all films that entertain.*

*To entertain is merely mere  
The highbrow tells me with a sneer.  
If you would rank among the wise  
You merely go to criticise.*

*You must learn talk of cuts and angles  
And just ignore domestic tangles.  
Is Ginger Rogers photogenic?  
Is Charlie Boyer schizophrenic?*

THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EYES—2

*Ignore the stars that make you shudder,  
Forget the chap's a perfect lover,  
Suspect the film with any glamour,  
And if a chap should wield a hammer  
Remember children soon turn wild,  
Forget not the delinquent child!*

*Select the films you wish to see,  
But cry that you are still not free!  
The Trade dictates what you may see  
And oh, beware of films marked B!*

*And if you see a film that's good  
It really must be understood  
You've wandered right outside your class  
It's just a break, you silly ass!*

## VIII

# THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

### Neglect of the Emotions; Drama; Music; Religion

*'How do you feel?'*—An English greeting.

*'It is the individual who is not interested in his fellow-men who has the greatest difficulties in life and provides the greatest injury to others. It is from among such individuals that all human failures spring.'*

—ADLER

THE emotions are the least understood and most abused of all man's qualities. We are afraid of them and rather ashamed of them. We like thinking of ourselves as mind and spirit. The intellectual life has a certain refined flavour which is very flattering, but the emotions are awkward. They are associated, in Anglo-Saxon countries particularly, with effeminacy. They are the things that 'run away with us', and in spite of the fact that one of our most common greetings is 'How do you feel?' on the whole we should be shocked to the core if anybody told us! Many of us have become intelligent enough to admit that we have a physical body and enjoy it. There are even a few who are now willing to acknowledge that it acts and reacts on their other selves, but we are so very anxious to be regarded as rational beings that we are still reluctant to admit that for the most part we do things because we feel like it and then find reasons for our actions afterwards. Indeed, if one confesses that one did something because one 'felt like it' one is in danger of being regarded either as unbalanced or hysterical or even artistic.

Hence the major part of our education is concerned with exercising and controlling the mind and exercising and controlling the body. If, however, one has any emotions the best thing to do is to ignore them completely, and if one cannot do

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

that one must control them as best one can. Yet even control has a limited interpretation with regard to the emotions. When people advise breath control they certainly do not mean 'Stop breathing', but for the most part when people talk about controlling the emotions they do mean 'Stop feeling'. As a result of this policy, emotions have become vaguely associated with unpleasant things. Anger is an emotion, and that certainly is not pleasant. Hatred is another, and that is even worse. Fear is another, and that is worse still, and the only other emotion we hear very much about is love, and encouraged by Freud, Jung and Adler people have spared no effort to assure us that this is nothing but eroticism or sex starvation. It can hardly be wondered, therefore, that although the Hindu philosophers recognise at least forty-one distinct emotions, most of us go through life trying to behave as though we had none.

Doctors are fond of telling us that when most people talk about health they mean the state of not being ill. Emotional health is seldom recognised at all, and the number of emotionally unfit persons in the modern world is probably at least equal to the number of the physically unfit.

The large majority of people deal with the emotions in one of two ways. The old-fashioned group believe that emotions must be suppressed at all costs. They point with delight to the example of the Stoics, carefully suppressing, as is their nature, the fact that the Stoics flourished in the most degenerate days of Greece. The more modern group, since they cannot enjoy bad health of the physical body, wallow in their emotional bad health—or better still what they choose to regard as the emotional bad health of other people! They read and partially digest all the psychological material they can get hold of, and having acquired a working vocabulary of words like 'suppressions', 'repressions', 'libidos', 'complexes' and 'inhibitions' they feel themselves justified in regarding all their acquaintances as interesting specimens to be torn apart with all the gusto of a small boy removing the legs from a fly. The fact that their definitions are usually wrong in no wise deters them, and any vulgar curiosity or ill breeding that they may display is excused on the ground of their familiarity with the words of a science which to them is a game.



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

The very fact that this group is growing reveals the necessity for people to pay more attention to emotional education and emotional health. After all, man is not yet governed by his intelligence, any more than he is still governed by his instincts. Feeling and desire is still the controlling force for most people, and if most of us are to achieve some control over our lives it must still be done by educating and civilising our emotions. We have set great store by the tag *Mens sana in corpore sano* and our knowledge mocks our hearts. One of the main hopes for modern civilisation would seem to be the conscious development of a new form of appeal based much more on feeling and emotions than on intellect and reason. It may seem retrogressive rather than progressive, but sometimes in the history of mankind it has been necessary to turn round in order to go forward. After all, as has been remarked before, the whole Christian religion is based on right feelings and the golden rule speaks of nothing but feelings—'Thou shalt *love* thy neighbour as thyself.' Feeling is after all the mainspring of our lives, and when all is said and done Gertrude Stein's reflection that 'I am, because my little dog loves me' has more universal significance than Descartes' 'Je pense, donc je suis.'

We are gradually and painfully eliminating physical bullying, but we are still only too liable to moral and emotional bullying from specialists in one particular excess. One is bound to admit that the murder of some importunate and eminently unsuitable emotion may sometimes be necessary; the world, it is true, has seldom been moved except by those people who have lived one-sidedly; but this intensive life has too often meant that man becomes an unco-ordinated function rather than a human being. It may be that such sacrifices are praiseworthy and necessary. It may be that the evolution of the species demands these psychological holocausts from those who have been chosen to serve its ends, and that certain men have a perfect right to murder such emotions as they do not feel the need of, just as they would have a perfect right to cut off their toes. But they have no right to impose such tastes on others and go round like Aunt Jobiska saying: 'Pobbles are happier without their toes.' No matter what she may say, most people aren't, and just because a large number of people cut out their

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

emotions or become emotional parasites, there is no reason why the majority of people should be denied the type of educational opportunity which might help them to realise their full potentialities. For the aim of a balanced emotional education would be the fullest possible realisation of all one's positive potentialities. It would mean helping people to live fully with every one of the whole range of their emotions. It would mean balancing the excessively self-conscious intelligentzia by persuading them to a study of the intuitive arts. It would mean remedying the effects of too much contemplation by action, and remedying too much slipshod living by helping people to enjoy some of the excesses of asceticism (the world lost a lot when Lent ceased to be a common religious observance which was upheld by both political and economic necessity.)

People who live light-heartedly should be encouraged to live more earnestly. But it is equally important that those who live life earnestly should endeavour to live more light-heartedly.

But in what way can we help people to live more fully emotionally? How can we encourage those who retreat from life to come forward and take part in it? How can we encourage those who have one panacea for all the ills of the world to look around and find some other paths which may also lead to the desired goal? How can we encourage those who think of nothing but the furthering of their own talents to sit back and form an appreciative audience while the talents of others are being displayed?

There is no new way. The main method in education of the feelings is through the artistic forms of music and drama, which should lead one inevitably, though possibly imperceptibly, to the realms of spiritual experience. For many people a study of the natural sciences, or of mathematics, satisfies a deep-seated emotional need; and is, indeed, far more often the reason for their devoted attendance at evening classes, lectures and many and various study groups, than the fact that such subjects have value for them either commercially or as intellectual exercises. Emotional education is very largely a matter of inducing a sense of awe and wonder, and of stimulating the imagination—and the natural sciences particularly

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

have their place in such education. There is, however, nothing about which people 'feel' more deeply than art, in one or other of its manifestations, and there is nothing which for its true appreciation needs more exercised emotion.

The worst of dabbling in any of the arts, however, is that one soon becomes tied up in various divisions. Just as some women can never be satisfied until they have classified and catalogued all their friends into lists headed 'My best friends', 'My next best friends', 'My second-best friends', 'My friends', right down to 'People I know' and 'People I nod to', so there are those people who are never satisfied until they have codified and classified what they call the 'useful' arts (in various degrees of usefulness) and what are known in contradistinction as the 'fine arts' (presumably because they are of no use to anybody!) Yet if art is skill, and there is no other definition that holds water, there can surely be only two main divisions: those arts which serve the body, like making chairs or dresses or tables, and those arts which mainly serve the emotions. It is these which are our main concern here. Art is skill in making things that live and move us and the way to indulge in its education is to surrender ourselves to be emotionally moved.

Many people, however, do not respond to the call of artistic experience, not because of a lack of capacity, but through cowardice. Just as there are many people who, if they answered honestly the first-aid examination question, 'What would you do if you saw a street accident?' would say: 'Run like the wind in the other direction!' so there are those who, confronted by the inrush of a great emotion, run away from it. One has to be prepared to go forward to meet emotion without fear.

Another great difficulty, of course, is pride. There seems to be an increasing number of people who are reluctant to forget themselves in admiration. There are so few who will admire, whereas there are many who will find fault. It has become the clever thing to criticise, to find fault. It shows that 'you are no fool', that 'you are not easily taken in', that 'you have high standards' and the value of emotional education is that it breaks down this, and other silliness. The test of the greatness of the spectator is his readiness to receive the greater emotion. The growth of one's emotions develops, like physical functions,

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

with use; sensitiveness demands as much training as common sense, and gets just as little.

Furthermore, the very fact that the world is changing so rapidly imposes upon us the necessity to train our emotions carefully, since a great deal of the difficulty as between nation and nation lies in emotional reactions. Intercommunication for many thousands of years only improved gradually, so that country could become friendly with country over the process of a couple of hundred years: But now intercommunication has improved so swiftly that nations are faced with the necessity of becoming intimate friends long before their emotions have been trained to take that step.

Probably the most successful method of achieving emotional education is through drama. From the Greeks onwards, and indeed long before them, dramatic literature and its performance has been a powerful form used by the creative minds and the educators of all civilised peoples in order to express their highest aspirations and their most prophetic utterances. We have to make constant opportunities, as the Greeks knew, to feel, to create, to understand—to feel our way gradually to thinking. It is only by exercising one's feelings of delight, of pity and of terror that one can learn the sort of feeling that isn't merely a reflex of fear. Hence an excellent way of keeping fit emotionally is through the vicarious experiences provided by the drama.

We ourselves are all dramatists, even if it is only in our dreams, and the appeal of drama is so strong that few people at some time or other during their waking lives have not wanted to be actors. Indeed, civilised life necessitates that from time to time we should all indulge in 'putting on an act'. We pretend to be delighted to see visitors, when we know very well that we wanted to go out ourselves. Without telling a deliberate lie we try to convey to our friends that we like a tie or a dress they have just bought, when in our heart of hearts we think it is terrible. All this is the bones of acting and the bones of drama—conveying an emotion to other people and trying to understand and sympathise with others. And because the 'dramatic' in human life is so much a part of our sleeping



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

and waking days, the field is thereby prepared for developing and educating the emotions through drama.

There are possibly three main methods of approach in any adult or youth group. One can persuade people to put on a play 'because we want money', which is rather regrettable both from the point of view of drama and from the point of view of educating any emotion but that of avarice. One can encourage them to see plays, and in this respect the Council of Arts has done a most remarkable piece of work. But one can also educate people by persuading them to play games that will reveal their dramatic talent, to act plays that shall give them emotional experience, and to write plays and to read plays, which will also give them an emotional experience. Moreover, if properly directed all this will fit them for the task as well as the pleasure of being an intelligent and emotionally prepared audience for other people's efforts.

The Council of Arts was set up during the war years under the name of C.E.M.A. to satisfy the desire of many people for that music, drama and art from which they were cut off as a result of the geographical situation of their work during war-time. But quite apart from satisfying a need which already existed, its activities created a vast new public for the various arts. From the outset the Council worked wherever possible through existing organisations, and evolved a method of general co-operation between itself and those orchestras and theatre companies whose aims and objects are in line with its policy, though the financial arrangements varied with each organisation. It was responsible in some measure for over a thousand theatre companies, six symphony orchestras, one chamber orchestra and four string orchestras. It is difficult to assess the exact extent of the audiences for which all these catered, just as it is impossible to assess the number of people who have seen original paintings for the first time through its endeavours. If one remembers, however, that the Old Vic has an average of two companies playing in London, at the Liverpool Play House or on tour, and if one adds to these the Sadlers Wells opera and ballet companies, it would probably be no exaggeration to suggest that the various Vic-Wells combinations alone reached an audience of over a million and a



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

half during each year of the war. Similarly, a symphony orchestra working fifty weeks in the year and giving an average of five concerts a week had an annual audience of at least a quarter of a million.

But the type of audience that goes to see a play put on by the Old Vic or by Tennants or to hear a symphony concert is, on the whole, at least a partially educated audience in the sense that it has already discovered its liking for good plays or good music, and has insisted on being fed even in war-time. What is much more interesting is that during the war years the Council tackled vast audiences of people who, either through lack of opportunity or through former unfortunate experiences of bad presentation, had not been attracted to good theatre or good music. A cinema-minded audience is never much impressed by the poor performance of indifferent plays by third-rate actors, or what is curiously known as the legitimate stage, but the war years have meant that people who never saw professional performances before in their lives have had the opportunity of doing so, and as always happens when people have been given a really good thing, they have asked for more.

One of the most interesting experiments in informal education has been the Council's work among war workers in factories and in hostels and on camp construction sites, not to mention the arrangement of concerts for the members of all the allied Forces and merchant navies and for all those who used the welfare centres and canteens. By the summer of 1943 a regular circuit of plays was touring the various hostels alone, and during that year the ballet and opera were taken to the same audiences. The result has been a demand for art clubs, music clubs, for more drama, more ballet and for 'real repertory', and it is extremely satisfying to know that this typically British adaptation of the Soviet 'art for the people' is to continue.

Nevertheless, although a taste for beauty has now been created in many fresh places, there is no doubt that numbers of people would welcome the opportunity to become more intelligent members of an audience; and if young people are to grow up to take every advantage of this Art for the People, no effort must be spared to educate them to receive it.

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

How can this preparation be done and what emotional education does it achieve? Among those who have not yet been plunged in *medias res* owing to the nature of their war-time work, it is probably wise to begin very gently. For most people, to form a drama group means to form a group which will act a play—usually, as has been said earlier, from the baser motive of persuading some unfortunate people to see it, and to pay good money for so doing. If that is the state of mind of any particular group one has to begin from there.

But a great many people who are devoted to the best in our dramatic literature are often disheartened and shocked by the lack of taste revealed in the selection of plays for acting. Of course, if people had taste to begin with there would be no need to bother. The very fact that their selections are not always happy is as much a proof of their need, as their desire is of their potentialities. Moreover, if one tries too much 'taste education' in drama groups in their early days, only too often the whole lot will do a Timon of Athens on you and melt quietly away. On the other hand, if one does nothing to improve the quality of the type of play produced, if one is satisfied with allowing a group to exercise what dramatic talent it has on not very worth-while material, one is merely indulging in a glorified form of puss in the corner, in which one changes plays but does not move out of one's emotional groove. What we really need is the type of drama enthusiast who will be prepared to start with Gertrude Jennings and by way, maybe, of Lionel Johnson and many others, arrive eventually at Jonson or any of the other master playwrights.

In this as in all other activities there is nothing wrong, indeed there is no other way but that of starting where the interest lies, whether it be in reading plays or romances or acting thrillers or West End comedy. The only acid test is: 'Is it first-rate of its kind?' Incidentally, if one is going to be fussy, there is really nothing much to choose between a great many Hollywood productions and some of the recent revivals of Restoration comedy of the 'Who will sleep with whom?' type.

There are two questions which it is worth while asking any group about any play which they have painstakingly produced. 'What are you most proud of in this production?' is the first.

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

The shocking thing is that quite a lot of them never know the answer. It seems rather futile, however, to spend a great deal of time over something which has not in some particular or another roused one's admiration or appreciation. The second question is one relating to characterisation (the same question that one asks about films): 'What would you have done if you had been X, or Y or Z?' If there is nothing of which you can be proud, and if there is no problem—if you don't know what you would have done in the place of X, or Y or Z, if you have never even considered the question—then one can only marvel that the interest has been sustained long enough to produce the play. One can only conclude that the chief reason for doing it was, either that it contains the necessary number of characters to absorb the whole group (three males, seven females and a chorus of voices off), or that it has a good part for temperamental Teresa, or that it is the sort of play in which it doesn't matter if Horace the hero wears spectacles.

It is true that you can put on a good show, amazingly enough, even if these were in fact the reasons for producing the play. But there is a lot of beginner's luck in dramatics, and the reason why so many dramatic groups 'fade away and droop and die', like the flowers in the song, is that this sort of haphazard luck does not last for ever. People get tired of devoting their evenings to the worthless, even though they are unconscious of the fact that it is its worthlessness which tires them.

In any case, in amateur dramatics undertaken deliberately as a means of emotional education, acting is not the important thing, no matter what the drama experts may say. After all, if it is true that we can only learn by doing, we can only learn to act by acting, and no amateurs do it often enough to achieve real skill. Even in the most energetic group of this kind one would be lucky to get six parts in a year and to put on a show of one week or a fortnight's duration twice in a year. The whole thing lacks the discipline of doing the same play night after night, or even a different play week after week, as unfortunate repertory companies have to do.

For amateur actors it is the play that is the thing. It is true that the play should beactable and castable, but we should

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

avoid the temptation to think in terms of production and technical accomplishments and concentrate on thinking in terms of the abundant reservoir of life from which all drama springs. One cannot learn to be a professional actor by joining an amateur dramatic company unless one already has exceptional talent; and perhaps the time has come when we ought to say so. It would have the advantage of being honest and might have the additional advantage of choking off some of the worst types of exhibitionists, both players and producers, at the outset.

I do not mean, of course, that we should never produce a play. To form a drama group and never act a play would make the whole thing absurdly theoretical; as stupid as knitting a sock that no-one should ever wear. What matters, however, for the amateur group is that they should have something real to bite on. It doesn't matter about the type of drama, or the type of plot, as long as it is alive with possibilities and problems. After all, the dramatist, like the novelist, suffers from the fact that there are far too few plots in the world. As someone has so truly said, 'The ingredients of most plots can be summed up as: Lad meets lass; lad loses lass; lad gets lass,' but the whole of tragedy and comedy lies between.

The essential function of drama considered as emotional education is not to make people act, not to produce a play, not even to raise funds for the vicar's coal and blanket club, but to give people something to do, something to feel and something to think about.

Nevertheless, it would be foolish to pretend that trying to act oneself has not great value as emotional education, even if one's actual artistic achievement is negligible. Acting helps us to control and exercise the body, it helps us to move gracefully, to dress carefully, to observe others closely, to listen intelligently, to speak more pleasantly, or at least audibly, and it gives us the self-confidence which goes with being able to do all these things.

Many instructors of drama groups can tell moving stories of the self-conscious girl, the shy boy, even the stutterer, the stammerer and the epileptic who have forgotten all their disabilities during the period in which they have become creatively

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

absorbed in their work. Every instructor can point to examples of the improvement of voice and diction, as well as the acquisition of vocabulary and information. People have gained poise and become more sociable and co-operative. But those who see in drama an opportunity to widen the emotional experience of any person should not be too anxious to find immediate results. The personality is not capable of too rapid a change—it is too fundamental a thing for that—and our business is not so much the observation of such changes, as that of giving an opportunity for these changes to occur at their own pace.<sup>1</sup>

Even in the matter of helping people to wear their clothes well, acting makes a contribution to the emotional well-being which is not to be despised. It is difficult to overestimate the importance to any young person who feels indifferent-looking, of being able to enjoy a few glorious hours in gorgeous clothes. 'To feel like a king on a frone', as the cockney lad put it. It does the adolescent good to appear in fine raiment or in full evening dress, for it makes him feel handsome and sophisticated for at least one crowded hour. Even the adult finds some relief in disguising himself for a little while as a Cavalier or a Round-head in those clothes which must have added so much to the intrinsic embarrassment of the Civil War.

If you 'feel' right, you can hold your head up and face the world. There is a great deal of sound psychology in the remark of the officer who met one of his men long after demobilisation, looking very seedy and down at heel. He stopped and chatted with him, and then said: 'Do you own this street, Bloggs?' 'No, sir,' said the seedy one, rather startled. 'Well then, for God's sake look as if you do,' was the reply.

It is far better to saunter through life than to shuffle. To be able to manage one's clothes, to open doors, to come into a room and get out of it again, without agonies of embarrassment is important to people's self-respect. There must be few women who have not been rendered giddy by the antics of the man who can never get to the edge of the pavement without a few false starts. The ability to carry off a situation is necessary in the society of human beings if one is not to be continually at a

<sup>1</sup>See *Journal of Social Psychology*, May 1945; 'Personality Changes from Acting in a Play', by W. M. Timmins.



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

disadvantage, and it is a great help to all men to learn to wear with ease the masks and make-up which all except the sons of God and fools must put on to face the world.

We have already considered the importance of learning to see. How many people really look at anything? What colour eyes has your milkman? Did you notice that that person who came to see you a little while ago had beautiful hands? That fellow in front of you walks with a slight limp; I wonder why? And why *do* you think that perfectly turned-out woman has failed to discover that her shoes want heeling, or if she does know about it, what possible reasons can there be for not having had them mended? This cultivation of observation is essential to the actor, however amateur, but it is also extremely important for the theatre and film going *audience* to develop it. By watching the little things, the tiny mannerisms, the little bits of 'business', the seemingly so casual lighting of a cigarette, one adds so much more to the enjoyment of seeing any great actor at work. Diana Wynyard once gave an excellent illustration of this close attention to detail and to human foibles. She gave artistic life to a very ordinary afternoon tea scene by toying ineffectually with the sugar tongs; at last, doing what nine out of ten people do, she put them down with a sigh and used her fingers. That little bit of 'business' had a whole emotional life of its own, and was a whole commentary on human nature if one had eyes to see it. But alas, most audiences only see about a third of what the accomplished actor portrays as he holds the mirror up to nature.

A study of the drama helps one to speak and helps one to listen. This matter of listening is another piece of vital emotional education. For listening is one of the most important and certainly the most popular of social graces. A student once went to an Eastern sage and asked him to tell him the secret of the art of conversation. 'Listen, my son,' said the sage. 'Yes father, and what then?' 'That, my son,' said the sage, 'is all.'

It is the inveterate listener, the person who can allow others to tell the whole story of their lives in a straight spate of seventy thousand words, who gets a reputation for being such good company, and who certainly gets the opportunity of influencing far more people than those who interrupt the narrative by

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

advice, however wise. Moreover, there would be less emotional tension in many a home if people only learnt to listen. There must be hundreds of intelligent husbands who, because they cannot listen, because they have not trained their ears, never know when their wives are about reaching breaking point. If only they could do so, what an avalanche of scenes they might be spared! Similarly there are many intelligent women who never realise from their husband's, their children's or their friends' overtones or undertones when they have gone too far, or not far enough. There are scores of people who hear what people say, but who seldom catch the tone in which it is said, and thus they limit their own imaginative understanding and lose many opportunities to help—even if that help has to be limited to remaining silent!

To speak is also one of the essential arts of a democracy. Few of us have been spared the embarrassment at one time or another of hearing a few ill-chosen words, ill-suited to the occasion, mumbled miserably by someone who knows not how to stand up, or when to sit down. Nothing can be more irritating than a badly produced voice. As one great teacher of singing always put it: 'For Heaven's sake, lift up your voice and let's hear it. If your voice is bad it is time you got rid of it, and if it is good it's time we heard it!' Yet the pleasant voice, the voice that has a full range of inflexions, is an instrument of enormous value and influence, and is a happy thing to possess or to hear.

It is not that one wishes to turn out ready-made orators or lecturers, but it is better for us and for those with whom we have to deal if we can, from time to time, say something effectively and, above all, with conviction.

Any study of the theatre, whether through watching people act, acting oneself, reading plays, or even playing at acting games, brings yet another emotional delight—an appreciation of timing. Not only the well-turned phrase, but the sense of timing, marks the great orator and actor. This does not mean merely giving people time to laugh so that one's next sentence is not thrown away, but giving point and emphasis to the simplest phrase—giving it in fact dramatic value. Winston Churchill is a masterly exponent of this gift of timing. One

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

good example, from his speech in America, was in speaking of Hitler's boast that the invasion could wait until he was ready 'when we will wring Britain's neck like that of a chicken'—[pause] some chicken—[pause] some neck.' Another fine example came in what is perhaps his greatest speech: 'And now we stand alone—[during the pause one thought of all the consequences] but—[he gave the nation the uplifting of the heart it needed by concluding with the unexpected but so inevitably right phrase which he had now given us *time to value*] we have that great honour.'

This study of speech, intonation and timing gives one entry into the whole kingdom of words and the lovely things that can be done with them—from the grandest utterances of dramatic literature to the exquisite little wisecracks of the really good film. Words are not only the tools of the mind, but the food of the mind, and to the gift of the seeing eye and the sensitive ear the appreciation of words can add the ability to think more carefully, to choose more skilfully and to judge rather than to pre-judge.

Is this play which the drama group is doing likely to develop any of these gifts? Has it been worth doing for any of these reasons, or has it suggested a new point of view? There are so many points of view, as Swinburne so clearly revealed when, on being reproached for throwing his cook out of the window, he cried: 'My God, I'm sorry! I planted some violets in the window-bed this morning.'

People whose lives are too happy and comfortable should be made extremely uncomfortable, unhappy and frustrated for a couple of hours by a play such as Galsworthy's *Escape*. People who go through life on the crest of the wave should be shaken by the pity and tragedy of Ibsen's *Ghosts*. Those who are poor and unhappy should learn of the unhappiness and boredom of those who have material comfort from Tchekhov's *The Three Sisters*. Those to whom philosophy means nothing should have an occasional experiment with time like that achieved in Priestley's *Time and the Conways*. The search for human happiness should take us through the adventures of Maeterlinck's *The Bluebird*, and we should all occasionally be citizens of a Utopia such as the island of *The Tempest*, or shall we be given

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

the *Treasure Island* of our dreams or at least the lighthouse of our dreams in such a play of escape par excellence as *Thunder Rock*?

All this is perfectly sound, and almost psychologically necessary. Drama deals with behaviour problems as much as psychology does. All the better-known complexes indeed have names which have derived from plays—the Oedipus complex, the Peter Pan complex, the Electra complex. One can study the urge to power and half a dozen other interesting family tensions in *King Lear*, or introspection in such a play as *Hamlet*. ('What would you have done if you had been Hamlet?') One can even take a short one-act play such as Harold Chaplin's *The Dumb and the Blind* and discover that one can interpret it in a number of different ways. The play shows man as the victim of economic conditions; it is also a riotously amusing experience with cockney figures of fun. By emphasising the accents and the navvies' clothes and the mother's curling pins one can play it as an amusing comedy of the poor, or then again one can sentimentalise the poverty and find in the play an overriding motive of pity which gives it that twist of a happy ending in the final action of the father taking the baby.

This play is but one very interesting example of the general necessity for emotional education. It reveals the universal tendency to run away from deep feeling. It reveals the only too common refusal of so many human beings to be loved, or to love, because they are so afraid that such an opening of the heart to love will make them, as indeed it does, defenceless. A play like *The Hasty Heart* shows how the cultivator, even in self-defence, of such characteristics as abruptness, brutality, intellectualism, or sheer acquisitiveness, can find eventually that far from being in armour he is in a barbed wire entanglement isolated from all mankind and even from his own good feelings. If one contrasts such plays as these with the treatment of dumbness and blindness in T. S. Eliot's *The Family Reunion*, one can reach a deeper understanding of the way in which so many unhappy people's minds work.

Indeed, all these vicarious experiences help people to receive that essential gift of education as opposed to learning—the gift of understanding. 'With all thy getting, get understanding,'



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

said Solomon, and the study of any play, whether through acting it or reading it, is, rightly interpreted, a marvellous adventure in human understanding. Such understanding stimulates the imagination and enlarges one's sympathies. No play is worth acting or reading unless it gives people this opportunity of getting into the skins of people whose actions and reactions may be far different from any within the range of their own experience. One of the most interesting pieces of emotional education that one can introduce to those who are 'doing plays' is that of building up the lives of the characters off-stage. Some most interesting and hilarious evenings have resulted, for instance, from encouraging a group to think out the sort of speech that Lady Macbeth might have made on opening a bazaar, or that Hamlet might have made at a prize-giving, or the conversation of the working party which might have met in Ibsen's *Doll's House* to knit for the deserving poor.

William Morris once said that one could never draw a mediaeval knight properly until one was capable of drawing a knight with his feet on the hob making toast on the point of his sword. Similarly, no characters really come alive to us until we know the sort of things that they would do in the intervals of those catastrophes with which their names are forever entangled. Understanding means sympathy, and sympathy is not only a matter of being able to cry at the right time, but of being able to laugh too. There is no duty which is so much neglected as the duty of being happy. Yet it demands far less physical energy, than being angry. One only uses thirteen muscles in order to laugh, whereas one needs to use sixty-three in order to frown. Perhaps that explains why those delightful mothers' groups in the University settlements of London and provincial cities, tired out with their daily work, are so readily moved to laughter, since it demands less energy, whereas those poor members of suburbia who have never done anything extravagant in their lives have enough surplus energy to be miserable about nothing.

A great advantage of studying drama in this way is that as one develops sympathy with the characters in the play one develops more sympathy with the rich drama of everyday life;



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

the drama of the street queue, of Hyde Park on a Saturday afternoon, of the people at a race meeting, or the tantalising drama of the people who sit next to one in buses, reading the most unlikely-looking books or having the most incredible conversations, or the mystery of those people who sit at the tables all round one in any restaurant from the Communal to the Café Royal. It helps one to develop patience and sympathy with people of the sort who eternally describe to one those aspects of their own character that appear to them to set them apart from ordinary mortals. 'It is a weakness of mine'; 'I simply can't bear the house without flowers'; 'I love children; I can't help it. They are so natural, aren't they?'; 'I'm funny that way.' They are indulging in the very human weakness of dramatising themselves. As a rule those who do it most have little other drama in their lives. Hence we should be moved to sympathy and pity rather than to laughter and irritation. As Aristotle puts it, the cream of life is neither happiness nor annihilation, but understanding. It is the imaginative sympathy and understanding, the sense of tragedy and comedy, that really train one to love one's fellow men, and therefore God our creator. It is indeed through the emotional experience of the love and understanding of one's fellow men that many people receive their first glimpse of God. It is through the drama that many people obtain their first real experience of the lovely fundamental truth of one of the most profound questions and answers in literature: 'Where are the dead? There are no dead.'

But this is all very well. Supposing one is faced with a group of people who have decided to play-act or to play-read because of your persuasive tone, or possibly because they can think of no other way of escaping even more energetic forms of education; a group in which one member stutters, another possesses a ferocious squint, three are young adolescents going through a stage-struck phase and growing much too fast withal, two are fully fledged extraverted exhibitionists, one of whom thinks he is Charles Boyer and another of whom thinks that Bette Davies has nothing that she hasn't got, and finally and most depressingly you have one who comes because 'my friend' comes. Or, even more difficult, what if you are faced with a group, three

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

of whom have terrific energy and goodwill, who are burning therefore to 'get up a play' as rapidly as may be to raise money for some charity or other, and who have collected in their zeal a set of well-behaved but inhibited sheep out of whom it will obviously be difficult to get a bleat?

What does all this add up to? What can we do with it? Paradoxically enough, if one believes in drama as a means of emotional education, most of one's work resolves itself into encouraging those who don't particularly want to act to do so, and discouraging those who want to act from doing so for as long as possible.

Those who want to act need to be helped towards better standards, need to be made to think more—not about their acting and producing (important as that is) but more about the work or works they are performing. They have to be gently encouraged to believe that it enriches their work to read many plays even while they are rehearsing one particular play—and they have to be encouraged to see the value of improving not only the standard of their performance but the standard of the actual play they produce.

All this means a great deal of reading. One of the most successful drama groups in London begins every rehearsal by reading a scene from another play. This is both an exercise, and a widening of experience, and has resulted in their achieving the emotional maturity necessary to produce beautiful plays which have been those glorious failures from which we can learn so much, once we have passed the stage of emotional infancy in which we blame others for our failures. From these failures, indeed, we can have an astonishing amount of fun. One of the most valuable prizes in life, reserved almost entirely for those who have high honours in emotional education, is that of taking failure as well as success in our stride.

Those who find themselves in a drama group because they have taken the line of least resistance (which occasionally leads us all into the most astonishing country and company) far from being held back need to be pushed forward, for once having realised that acting is fun they will be loosened up enough to enjoy all the other delights of dramatic literature, probably

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

even more quickly and readily, and often indeed more appreciatively, than those with 'a talent for acting'. One can do nothing with such a group until they are comfortable, until they have stopped feeling foolish, in fact. Hence some of the best dramatic work in both adult and adolescent groups of this kind has begun from playing games, which are deliberately designed to lead them imperceptibly to a feeling for words and a delight in movement. For those who refuse point blank to have anything to do with acting, perhaps one of the best ways to begin is to get them interested in words—to get them interested in characterisation—to get them interested in making things up for themselves and then before they know where they are they are play-reading, and it really doesn't matter very much if they don't act. It is an advance if in this way they merely reach the point at which they are better equipped to obtain delight from the efforts of others, professional or amateur.

The question of getting people interested in words will be dealt with more fully later on. One of the great tragedies of life is that people are not really interested in words even if they are articulate. They do not roll words round their mouths. They do not understand or have fun with words. The radio gives one an excellent excuse for starting up various word games such as that hardy favourite 'all the words you can think of beginning with A, B, or C,' which was a feature of 'Monday Night at Eight' for a very long time. These games can lead on to such activities as chain spelling: I say 'London' and you must then name a town beginning with 'N'—Norwich—which must be followed by a town beginning with 'H'—Hull—which may give you Leeds, Liverpool or London. This chain spelling can be used for countries, for rivers, for vegetables, for almost any classification of objects. There are the old-fashioned shopping games too. 'I am going to Wolverhampton. What can I buy there beginning with "W"?' Or to Dover, and the things you can buy beginning with 'D'.

After this casual introduction one can attempt something a little more difficult such as a rhyming bee. The spelling bee is so often a little embarrassing if one isn't a good speller, or if one is the sort of speller who has to see a word written before

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

making an attempt at it. The rhyming bee has none of these disadvantages. One can take an easy beginning—all the words you can think of rhyming with 'bee' itself, for instance, or with 'say' or with 'nice'. One can proceed to double rhymes and sooner or later the moment will come when someone in a brave effort to follow up 'bomb' will give you 'comb' and there is the starting point for a different consideration of words. Having rhymed and double-rhymed for a while one may then be at the stage where one can start making up rhymes, limericks and even ballads for oneself, but this will be discussed more fully in the next chapter.

If it is drama that one is concerned with, the next stage, or an almost simultaneous activity, is that of getting the group interested in the way in which words are said. There are quite a number of 'expression games' beginning from the very easy alphabet speech. A group can be amused for a fair amount of time with the type of game in which you say the alphabet or the twice times table, sadly, gaily, impressively or as though you were unveiling a statue. One can then proceed to sentences. How many different ways can *you* say: 'You will stay to tea, won't you?' or 'Don't come too late'?

Having learned to listen to finer shades of meaning it may be that the group would be sufficiently at ease to indulge in action. In this matter of action, possibly one of the best ways of beginning is through the mimed message. This is based on the same idea as the message which is whispered down a line, but in this case instead of a verbal message we transmit an acted message. All but the person starting the game and the next in the line hide their faces. The person delivering the message then performs a simple action. Such an action might be that of rocking a baby to sleep, pressing the bell for a lift, waiting for it to come and then getting into it, or washing out a cloth and hanging it on a line. These actions are carefully watched by the first person, who then taps the shoulder of the next player and repeats the action, and so on until all of the line have had a turn.

This is a test not only of acting but of observation, and until one has seen it done it sounds almost incredible to relate that in a row of only ten players, hanging out clothes on a line has



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

many times been so distorted by the imitators that the last player has proudly interpreted it as playing a trumpet or rocking a baby to sleep—while waiting for a lift and going down in it was once interpreted as digging a grave! The game has another advantage, besides that of training observation; it allows the diffident to act without realising that they are acting, and one can often spot extremely promising potential actors and actresses in this way.

It is at this stage that one can sometimes introduce words—‘made up as you go along’. But this must always be done gradually, since for those who are rather shy it is a real advantage very often not to have to remember both words and actions. One can go on to more difficult crowd scenes, such as a group at a race meeting or going round a picture gallery, or arriving rather late at a play. One can go on to mimed scenes, or mimed stories, words or proverbs. The old-fashioned name for all this, of course, is charades. One can even act jokes in mime. Indeed the acting of a joke is often a much better way of beginning than the acting of ballads or nursery rhymes. Ballads are so apt to be long drawn out, and nursery rhymes are always in danger of being considered ‘a kid’s game’.

The next step from the free-for-all game and impromptu charade is a tricky one. Many people feel that the miming of ballads, poems and songs is the right move. Miming would seem the answer when one is dealing with groups who find difficulty in speaking at all, and greater difficulty still in learning their words.

The great drawback of miming is that when one has left charades and jokes behind and is preparing more difficult and polished work (particularly if one is misguided enough to make a public performance) miming can be very shy-making—both for the actors and the audience. It is not easy to forget the acute embarrassment of a group of adolescents who had been pushed into the drama group at a week-end school. (They were no good with their hands and therefore *couldn’t* do crafts, and they *wouldn’t* do P.T.) The instructor was a first-class teacher—for small children—and faced with a group, few of whom could act or speak, she very sensibly decided on miming. Alas—the mime she chose would have been delightful for small



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

children—but boys of 15 to 18 are not comfortable pretending to be 'Raggle Taggle gypsies' prancing on the lea! Mimes with adults young or old must be either really tough stuff or else romantic burlesque or melodrama of the kind that gives the actors as much fun as the audience. One of the most successful mimes of this kind was a burlesque of *Maria Marten*; or, *the Murder in the Red Barn*, once produced by a group which had seen the play acted by a very fourth-rate company. Another fruitful source for mime is the popular song of the day—whatever day it may be.

Another method of avoiding the learning of words for as long as possible in groups that find this a difficulty is through the use of puppets. The worst of puppets, however, is that those who make them seldom seem interested in using them—and those who see them being made can seldom see how one could or should use them. On the whole puppets appeal much more to the very young and the adult. Unless puppetry is carefully handled it makes little appeal to the adolescent; clubs and youth centres are strewn with puppets and half-made puppets that no-one has ever used. If, however, one can find someone who will teach people to work them *after* they are made, one has an excellent chance of persuading some of the same people to make up plays for puppets—and play-making is equally as 'educational' as play-acting.

Play-making, indeed, is sometimes one of the most successful methods of informal education through the drama. This sounds very ambitious, and indeed it is, but fortunately few of the playwrights realise what they are doing. Nearly all groups of people who gather together fairly frequently find themselves at some time or other forced into the position where they have to organise a concert, whether it be the public house smoking concert or the Technical College Christmas play. There are also hosts of people who are interested in entertainment (amusing themselves and amusing others), and who, while they could not be persuaded to embark on plays, are almost married to various types of concert work. There are few things more miscellaneous than what is so aptly called a 'miscellaneous concert', and even the club or community centre finds that after a time the concert with its repeating

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

pattern of opening pianoforte solo, song, comic turn, mouth organ solo, tap-dancing, causes the strongest member to shudder and turn pale.

It is just at this stage that something can be done. Quite often they have reason to be proud of one or two of their soloists or of their acrobatic dancers, or what have you, and with very little trouble and ingenuity the whole thing can often be woven into a review or pantomime. Not so long ago the Devon Club Members' Council decided that they would 'have a concert' after their Annual General Meeting. The great difficulty about this was that the members came from widely scattered areas, and could not meet for rehearsals; they did not know one another very well, they had a different variety of talents and the whole thing might have been extremely sketchy. However, when everybody had sent in to the secretary the various items that they proposed to perform, a group of three 'devised' (their word) some linking material which pulled the whole thing together.

As they themselves said:

'The Tiverton Club had previously given a musical show, "A la Carte", and we determined that this should be roughly on the same lines. Part of the Tiverton pantomime, "The Sleeping Beauty", formed the base of the story and the rest was fitted in from that.

'We did not use all the ideas sent in by the clubs, but picked out what seemed most suitable, having no idea whether they were good or bad. The turns not suitable for "The Garden of Happiness" were used for the rehearsal of a concert which was to be given on the wedding day of the Prince and Princess.'

The 'devisors' have very kindly given permission for the linking script to be quoted here. They would be the first to agree that many others have done this sort of thing before, and will do it again, and they would be the last to claim that it is the only model in scripts of this kind. What is, however, both important and helpful is that it shows clearly how this sort of thing can be done entertainingly and tidily, and it shows clearly too how even the miscellaneous concert can be used to give people opportunity for co-operative work and artistic arrangement.

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

No apology is made for quoting the whole script because so often in this business of 'making up your own plays' people are all too ready to tell you that 'it can be done'—but most unwilling to show one samples of 'how' it is done:

SCENE I. A HIGHWAY (*Cockney painting white line on road.*)

PRINCE: Ho varlet!

COCKNEY: Oi ain't a varlet, oi'm an evacuee. 'Oo do yer think you are, anyway?

PRINCE: I am Prince Charming, knave, eldest son of the great Panjandrum of the Never-never land. As I and my merry men came hunting the boar o'er yonder hillock, my noble steed shied at a passing jeep, and, flinging me to the ground, bolted with fiery breath and flowing mane back to the precincts of his homely stable. My merry men pursuing chase recked naught of this, and lo, I am left alone in strange country, far from home and kindred, alas!

COCKNEY: Blimey, and in them knickers too! Take my advice, chum, and get back inside before yer gits copped.

PRINCE: Inside? . . . Peace . . . fool! Cease this aimless chatter and tell me in which direction, north, south, east, west, north-east, south-west, north-west, south-east, north-south, east-west, lies my royal father's kingdom?

COCKNEY: Coo-er loveaduck! What do you think I am . . . the R.T.O.? or a blooming parf-finder? All I know is the way to the local . . . ain't I told you 'oim an evacuee?

PRINCE: Odsbodikins.

(*Behind some old ivy the COCKNEY finds a sign: 'To the Palace'.*)

COCKNEY: Coo blimey! Jest look wot I've found. Is this any-fink to do with you, guvnor?

PRINCE: For sooth, an interesting discovery. Maybe the Royal Palace will afford me a night's lodging. To whom does this royal castle appertain, friend?

COCKNEY: 'Old on, oo are you callin' nimes? Cor, this must be somefink to do wiv wot that bloke was talkin' abart on the wireless.

PRINCE: What bloke . . . moke?

COCKNEY: Abart a bit o' skirt wot's been sleeping for the best

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

part of a century waiting for some prince chap to come and give her a smacker.

*(The wicked fairy enters, disguised as an old woman.)*

BUZZBOMB: Gudarternune . . . loked a bit cloudylike this marnin', come up a bit wetlike, lukes as if it'll be fine later.

Us warnts rain though, the tetties be martle dry and the flies be in the turmits. Where be you gwine in they gladrags?

PRINCE: To the castle.

BUZZ: Castle? There bain't no castle thickey way, th'll be maining Victoria Hall. You goes up this road and you walks on for abart three-quarter mile, and then you comes to a duckpond, but ee don't take no notice of ee . . . you goes on for another mile and up over a lilill, and then you sees a lane to Rackenford, but don't take no notice of ee . . . then you be abart vorty mile from Princetown prison . . .

ALL: But don't take no notice of ee . . .

BUZZ: Then you goes upalong over to Gibbet moor, but . . .

ALL: Don't take no notice ov ee . . .

BUZZ: Then you goes round by the school and behind the church and there 'tis right in front ov ee, ye can't missun . . . Tiss a nice place too, a proper job it be. . . .

PRINCE: Enough dame, I will away. *(Exit.)*

COCKNEY: Ta, ta, grandma. *(Exit.)*

BUZZ: Now the prince will lose his way

He'll never see the palace today. *(Exits with a dreadful laugh.)*

PRINCE: Hold, sirrah . . .

*(Enter good fairy.)*

FAIRY: Tarry awhile, oh handsome Prince

Your fate has been decreed long since.

PRINCE: Oh beauteous nymph.

FAIRY: Yonder yokel is no fool

But a wicked witch, and cruel.

PRINCE: Is that so? Tell me more, beautiful. *(Ballet dance by FAIRY.)*

FAIRY: Come with me into the Palace,

There you'll find the Princess Alys.

PRINCE: Let us away, her very name

Surely sets my heart aflame.

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

### SCENE II. THE GARDEN OF HAPPINESS

*Grouped on the stage are eight beautiful girls, and as the PRINCE and FAIRY enter, the curtain rises.*

*As each girl steps forward she is introduced to the PRINCE by the FAIRY.*

Dance: The Minuet.

Song: 'The Garden of Happiness'.

Recitation: 'Pilot of the Plains'.

Song: 'I'll walk Beside You'.

Dance: Irish Jig.

Song: 'Clementine' (*sung by audience while PRINCE and CLEMENTINE mime*).

Song: 'Lass with the delicate air'.

*(While the last song is being sung the Princess enters the garden and immediately the Prince knows it is she and falls in love with her.)*

Duet by Prince and Princess: 'The Way You Look Tonight', followed by a waltz.

*During interval Violin Solo.*

### SCENE III. THE PALACE KITCHEN

*The curtain rises to show the cook, POGGS, seated at the table daydreaming. The QUEEN enters.*

QUEEN: Goodness gracious Poggs. . . . What a dreadful smell, something is burning. . . . Nothing ready, simply nothing. Have you taken leave of your senses? Oh dear . . . where are the pastries and the trifles, the banana soufflés, the chocolate éclairs, the jellied eels . . . and the christening cake . . . ?

POGGS: There be the pasties. . . .

QUEEN: Pasties! But I didn't order pasties. Oh dear, what shall we do? All these people coming . . . all as hungry as wolves. . . . These foreigners eat such a lot . . . (*Cries*).

POGGS: Never mind, me dear. . . . 'Tis all coming . . . I'll do it all this afternoon. I can soon rattle up a few buns. . . .

QUEEN: RATTLE UP a few buns. . . .

POGGS: I know, I'll slap ee up a few turnovers, them's tasty. Don't ee fret, now.

QUEEN: Slap up turnovers . . . (*Renewed cries*).

POGGS: Now don't ee carry on like that, me dear. Us'll knock ee up a proper blow out . . . only I 'aven't got enough sugar,



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

and Doreen 'as gone up over to Lord Bigbug's place, and cook there 'ave lent us a bit till next week's rations come . . . and a nice bit of butter, too.

QUEEN: RATIONS! What are rations at a time like this? Tell the Lord Chamberlain to run round to the Keeper of the Royal Coupons and draw all His Majesty's sugar for the cake. And the artistes for the Wedding Feast have not arrived for their rehearsal. (*More hysterics.*)

POGGS: Never mind, Queen Gertie.

QUEEN: (*Hysterics.*)

POGGS: Watch me. I'll do ee a bit of ballet.

(*The ballet by POGGS is interrupted by the commère announcing the arrival of the artistes. The PRINCE and PRINCESS enter and are seated on the left of the stage.*)

COMMÈRE: The artistes, your majesty.

Dance: Sailor's Hornpipe.

Recitation: 'Ah! Me'.

Dance (*Tap and song*): 'Don't say that no-one loves you'.

(*As each artiste entered, the COMMÈRE made suitable remarks but as these were not written down, no-one knows what they were.*)

## FINALE

*The Royal Symphony Orchestra (Percussion Band in which all the cast joined, those who had not learnt the instruments singing) playing American Airs.*

The whole thing was an enormous success, but even at the risk of labouring the obvious one may perhaps point out one or two things. In the first place the clever device of the Garden of Happiness enabled the producers to use widely differing material, hornpipes, minuets and songs old and new. Secondly the device—the pantomime device, of course—of making the stock characters speak in a delightful mixture of ancient and modern idioms is particularly acceptable to young people. An amusing blend of this type will make it possible for the most self-conscious group of players, and the most self-conscious audience, to accept material which is either fairy-like in its beauty, or part of the classical tradition of song and story. They cannot always take either classics or fairies

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

straight, and it is of no value to give people an emotional diet that is too rich for them.

Another method of mingling writing with acting is to choose the story or theme which is going to link the whole, and then deliberately choose items which will fit into this particular pattern. For instance, one group of people made a particularly delightful review called 'Country Life' in which all the scenes, the music, the dancing and the inevitable funny sketch dealt with some aspect or other of life on the land. Numerous other topics will readily occur to most people.

Indeed an interest in playmaking can often be encouraged through another predominant interest. For example, a member of a Westmorland Young Farmer's Club wrote, and his club performed, a most interesting one-act play called 'The Young Farmer'. It was pure propaganda, of course. 'Oh Mr. Thompson,' says one of the characters, 'I would hardly say we only amuse ourselves. Why, I know twice as much about judging cows as I did. In the Y.F.C. we are encouraged to use the scientific names'—but it was of great educational value for their elders—and it was propaganda with a sense of dialogue and situation.

Many clubs begin with the writing of their own pantomimes. The music need present very few difficulties since it is always possible to weave in the popular songs of the moment. It even gives an opportunity for the club poet to write different words to the music, and this, besides being in itself a useful exercise, has the tremendous advantage that however bad they are they can seldom be more trite than the original ones.

The Oxford House Club in Risca, Monmouthshire, produced a pantomime for the seventh year in succession in 1944. They chose 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs', and although they could not get permission to use the Disney film names they were allowed to use all the songs. Their script too had delightful topical touches which helped the thing along. For instance, the difficulties of war transport found their reflection when, in the Queen's last effort to kill Snow White, she turned herself into an old woman, but had to wander for miles on foot because the buses were full and she had used up all her petrol ration.

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

Even if the pantomime sketches themselves are not written in the first place by the group they can be linked together with the story of the pantomime, which by tradition always has its rather inconsequential moments. One great advantage of pantomime work, of course, is that it links together music and dancing with drama, and once people have tried this type of thing they very often go from strength to strength. The plot of any given sketch can be worked out by a group; they can often take a story which is well known to them and dramatise it.

With all its faults, does not this Murder Scene from *Macbeth*, as played by a 14-year-old group of young toughs after having been told the story, live in a way more valuable than any academic essay on the subject? It was taken down verbatim by a member of the audience.

LADY M. (*seated, in green evening frock and gumboots*): Knocking.

. . .

(LADY M. *goes to door*.)

KING: I've come to the seaside, the bombing's been too much for me. Can I see Macbeth?

LADY M.: Yes, 'e'll be back any minute now. Sit down, won't yer? Will you 'ave something to eat? We've got 'am or cheese. Cup o' tea?

KING: 'Am, please, and tea.

(*Enter MACBETH. Kisses LADY MACBETH.*)

MACBETH: 'Allo, King, I mean sir. (*To LADY M.*) You'd better go and get 'is room ready, mother. (*Exit LADY M. without protest.*)

(MACBETH *settles down to a cup of tea with the KING.*)

There's a lot of illness in the army—we'll 'ave to send out some more nurses.

KING: What's wrong?

MACBETH: I think it's called impetigo.

KING: Oh, yes, I 'ad 'eard. (*Enter LADY MACBETH.*)

LADY M.: Your room's ready. We'd better 'ave supper before we go to bed. Cup o' tea?

MACBETH: 'Ave some cheese or some 'am.

LADY M.: 'E 'ad 'am for 'is tea. 'E don't want it twice. (*To*

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

KING.) Is your tea too strong? 'Ave a bit more sugar in it. (*Puts in sugar liberally.*)

MACBETH: 'Ere steady, we shan't 'ave any left.

LADY M.: Now you'd better go to bed. 'Ere's yer bed. The office is outside, and the key's on the mantelpiece. I 'ope you sleep well. (*Exit KING.*)

LADY M.: Now's yer chance.

MACBETH: I daren't do it. It's not like me.

LADY M.: You won't get another chance. You must!

MACBETH: I can't—look at all what 'e's give me. This castle and all these medals!

LADY M.: You've always wanted to be great, haven't you?

MACBETH: Supposing they found out—we'd both be killed.

LADY M.: They won't find out, I've made the grooms drunk.

. . . Do yer want to be King, or don't yer?

MACBETH: Yes . . . but I can't do it.

LADY M.: Well, if you don't, I will!

MACBETH (*rising reluctantly*): Oh well, men's pluckier nor what women are. (*Exit MACBETH.*)

(*LADY M. looks round agitatedly—pours herself out a cup of tea. MACBETH returns having performed the deed—very shaken [literally.]*)

LADY M.: I told you to leave that dagger in with the grooms—take it back!

MACBETH: I ain't going in there again!

LADY M.: 'Ere, give it to me, I'll take it. (*Takes it and returns while MACBETH continues to shake.*) (*Knocking without.*)

'Ere, come on, we'd better get to bed—get yer pyjamas on. (*They undress and lie down.*)

[One turns to the audience and says:

'That's all, miss, that's the end.']

Here we have the spirit, and as Shakespeare said through his wicked old mouthpiece Falstaff: 'Give me the spirit!'

One of the most interesting pieces of live educational material which one could wish to see was the script of a revue from a Manchester youth centre. All the sketches had been written by the club members themselves. They had worked it out most carefully, and had included drawings of the stage sets

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

and the costumes, and marked the places where the lighting changed and how it changed. The whole thing was carried through by boys and girls between the ages of 15 and 18, and the carefully marked and coloured script was an effort to help someone who could not attend the concert to 'imagine it'. One of these sketches was so good that not long afterwards a celebrated journalist asked permission to use it in a club in which he was interested.

But the best success story of this kind is probably that of a young man who belonged to another youth centre. He had become a member of the drama group and had written one or two sketches, and a one-act play. These had been sent to me from time to time, and as they seemed to reveal no small measure of promise the advice of drama experts was taken on them. They suggested that one or two more sketches of that kind might well make a useful little book which could be published commercially and which might find a market among other such groups. Before this young man could complete enough sketches to make such a book he was called up, and we lost touch with one another.

Later on, the opportunity occurred to enter one of his plays for a drama competition. Indeed, the suggestion that he should compete came from one of these experts who had been consulted earlier. It was essential for the purpose of the competition that we should have his exact age on the day on which the sketch was written. It was then learned that this young man had taken part in the D-day operations, and on D-day plus twenty-eight or twenty-nine had been wounded and was in a hospital in England suffering from a form of amnesia.

He himself could not remember anything about his plays, and said that he had had a great deal of rather rueful amusement in reading his own work from the point of view of an outsider. Nevertheless, this contact with his former leisure time pursuits was a great help to him on his way to recovery. The story is not spoiled at all, since he actually won a prize in the competition! What is more important than this, however, is a chance remark he made while he was still ill. 'You know,' he said, 'I now understand what Youth Service was for. Chaps like me have an interest in life. I can continue with my reading



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

and my writing. It's the chaps in our hospital that have never done anything since they left school that get the willies—they've nothing to do now, and so they think they've nothing to live for. Chaps like me are almost enjoying the time we've got now to go on with our hobbies and the planning we're doing for the future. A good club teaches you how to live.'

One of the newest techniques of making your own play has come to us from America, and has been adapted over here by Army Education Officers. This is the technique called 'Living Newspapers', and as it is used for A.B.C.A. it has meant the dramatising of current events and current problems with a minimum of scenery and gaining most of one's effects by spotlighting the chief characters in each episode.

This method of working up material owes something to the documentary method of both the film and the radio. It is both creative and informative, and as for the most part it relies for its effects on rapidly changing scenes and lighting, it is possible to ignore the ordinary limitations of time and space. The finished product, of course, is found in the work of a man like Clifford Odets in *Waiting for Lefty* or *Get Up and Sing* or what has been called the strip-cartoon play *Skin of our Teeth* by Thornton Wilder.

Just as the street queue is full of dramatic incident, so the daily newspaper is full of drama of all sorts and kinds. The reasons for all the difficulties of war-time transport have been excellently arranged and dramatised in this living newspaper form by Frances Mackenzie in a play called *Platform Six*. Such subjects as the story of the vote, the history of agriculture, the history of education and that of trade unions have also been dramatised by various groups. The fight against dirt and distress, and the problem of housing have all lent themselves to this method.

A group of soldier players showed a West End audience how much can be achieved with this technique by putting on two of their Living Newspapers. One of these, *The Great Swap*, gave the story of Lease-Lend in dramatic form. This intricate subject was reduced to its simplest terms in a series of factual flashes which relied on characterisation and comedy to point

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

the moral of the economist and enrich the mind of the audience. The whole showed with telling effect how economic co-operation in war-time was secured not by reckoning up the cash and who was to pay it, but by counting in terms of the job that had to be done.

*Where do we go from here?* which dealt with the problem of employment after the war, lent itself more easily to comedy, but it drove home concisely and pungently the plain fact that our economy must be planned if the change over from war to peace is not to repeat the mistakes of 1918 and the grim years afterwards.

The A.B.C.A. team is blessed in having excellent script writers working for it, and in having inspired producers. The lesson to be learned from their work is, however, that this type of slick charade-making can be engaged in by any drama group. Moreover, script writing of this kind can be a co-operative effort. In one youth club, for instance, where during the General Election an effort was being made to interest the members in the romance of universal suffrage, a Living Newspaper on the subject was prepared by several groups, each one being responsible for an episode which should bring to light the main gains in each of the Acts from 1832 onwards, which brought about electoral reforms. The 'flapper vote' group produced a delightful episode, as might have been expected, but each scene had dramatic value, and each group had done a considerable amount of reading to get their material right.

It would not be a bad plan, in a real live democracy, to have a vigorous campaign to create as many drama groups as possible doing this sort of thing under intelligent leadership for the good of our souls and the salvation of the State. The dramatic interlude technique has been used over the radio for a long time as a method of promoting interest and provoking discussion—notably in the broadcasts to schools, in the special programmes for young people and in the brilliant series by Jennifer Wayne designed to make people more knowledgeable about the law. These and many other programmes are most fruitful sources of inspiration for any group which can be encouraged to write scripts of its own. The Joyce Grenfell 'How not to . . .' series is another valuable model. As these stand

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

they are a little too subtle and sophisticated for many groups, but the technique is invaluable for shy-making subjects. There are various problems of health and hygiene, social behaviour and so on, which it is extremely difficult to get across without seeming either superior or pious. With a sufficiently light touch it is possible to produce a series of dramatic sketches which shall, while ramming the point home hard, yet preserve the dignity of all by giving us the opportunity to laugh at the foibles of others, rather than to blush at the mistakes which we ourselves make. A series of hygiene talks has been illustrated with interludes such as 'How not to prepare for a dance'; social behaviour in many of its aspects has been dealt with in dramatic form under such titles as 'How to lose your boy friend', 'How to be a perfect nuisance in public and in private', 'How to spoil the concert for everybody' and so on. All these questions are really, after all, a matter of right feeling, and therefore a matter of emotional education.

The great value of all play-making is not only the creative outlet it provides, but the fact that it can be done as a co-operative activity and that no group can do very much in the way of writing even the simplest script without having to search for information and without studying the work of other writers—which means that the group is being encouraged to read.

Reading plays is of itself, however, an abundant source of emotional education. As a rule it is only dull because it is done badly. Like any other seemingly casual performance it needs preparation, and it is most important to walk before you attempt to run. If one is going to use the reading of plays as an introduction to dramatic work, there are a few golden rules.

In the first place, it is always better to begin play-reading with a one-act play, rather than a three-act play. Secondly, it is better to begin by using a play with two characters before one with four, and one with four characters before one with eight. Thirdly, until people have become very good indeed it is much better to choose plays which have very little action. People whose dramatic sense is only slowly awakening are apt to feel foolish. (Indeed, a feeling of foolishness is one way of retreating from emotion, which is often the reason why people giggle in church.) Therefore one must

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

avoid the sort of play in which, for instance, two characters sitting with their noses in books are pretending to engage in a bloody duel. The people who are reading the play feel silly and if this is done before an audience, and the audience isn't used to play reading, they too are apt to get restive or embarrassed even if they are not reduced to laughter.

Alas, in play-reading, as in so much amateur dramatics, the people who are taking part usually have much more fun than the audience. Therefore if one is suggesting that a play-reading group reads to an audience it is absolutely essential that no attempt should be made to do so at sight. Reading aloud is not as easy as most people think, and it needs a really accomplished reader to sight-read with any degree of conviction. Even the accomplished sight-reader sometimes tends to be a liability rather than an asset, since he very often puts the rest of the group off by plunging into improvisations without due regard to the text or to slow-witted brethren.

There are two main methods of play-reading: and first we have the one in which people hold the script in their hands and try to act as much as possible, waving their books madly in the air and losing their places at crucial moments. This is quite impossible for people who have not done a great deal of acting already, and it can be disastrous with those who are not quick, ready and able readers, or with those who get excited and lose their places. The other way, by far the better, is that of sitting round a table. It is usually better to use two or three small tables rather than one large one, since this makes it much easier for the audience and facilitates a certain amount of grouping of characters. It is also much easier for the readers themselves if they are broken up into small groups and sit as far as possible next to those people with whom they are directly concerned. Until a group has had a great deal of practice in play-reading it is much better for them to do it for their own enjoyment and for their own amusement. Indeed in all this business of studying characterisation, motives and plots, the play-reading is merely the preliminary part of the work.

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

Nevertheless for those people who run community centres or settlements or clubs which meet on Sunday night there is no more valuable answer to the eternal moan of 'What shall we do on Sunday evening?' than that of encouraging a play-reading group to read for the benefit of a large audience. Fortunately there are a great many plays which lend themselves to Sunday night activities of this kind, and there is a wealth of material of other kinds which can be adapted for dramatic readings. Moreover, play-reading can be organised with remarkable effect by keeping the actors out of sight and arranging for them to read through a curtain or screen—announcing quite firmly that this is a 'live radio play'.

In the early stages it is very wise to concentrate on dialogue or plays which have two main characters and one extremely subsidiary one. In this matter one is helped in that it is not always necessary to use an entire play. One can very often 'lift' delightful pieces of dialogue from novels. There is hardly anyone who hasn't lifted pieces of *Alice in Wonderland* for this purpose in school. The same thing can be done with most of Dickens, and much of Jane Austen, and there are a number of short stories that lend themselves admirably to this treatment. This is another job for the script writer—or better still a group of script writers.

Incidentally, it is no good being mean over copies for play-reading. The best readers in the world cannot read effectively if they are sharing a copy with three other people, and it is quite impossible if the three or four copies have to be handed around the group after the manner of the three Norns passing their eyes and their teeth around. Moreover, there is very little excuse for not having sufficient copies nowadays, since through affiliation to such societies as the British Drama League, and owing to the sympathy and co-operation which can be obtained from most public librarians, if sufficient notice is given sets of books can be borrowed. Furthermore, there are many young people who are very ready, if asked, to type out extra parts for a drama group in odd half hours after work, because it is the skill of their working life to type. It is often possible, too, if one seeks such help and co-operation,



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

to find a friendly teacher of shorthand and typing who will give any material one needs as practice copy to some of her classes. After all, they might just as well be copying something useful for you as copying out the incredible exercises to be found in so many typing manuals! One must, however, issue a word of warning here, and a word of warning about play-reading generally. The law of copyright and the question of royalties are both operative with regard to plays whether they are acted or read 'in public', and the definition of 'public' is a very strict one. In all these matters one would be well advised to seek help and guidance from such an authoritative body as the British Drama League, or a County Drama Organiser. It is nearly always possible to obtain concessions, especially for material that is used for educational or instructional work. Honesty about these matters is important, however, even if it is tiresome; the labourer is worthy of his hire and even authors have to live.

It would be a great advance if many adults who are literary minded would band themselves together to play-read for others. After all the musician, the singer and the actor give freely of their talents to groups of all kinds. Many adults who have the advantage of being widely read, and who are pleasant readers, might well find joy themselves and give great joy to others if they would form play-reading groups and offer their services as *performers* to Youth Centre groups, to Mothers' Clubs, Parents' Associations and the like. If they could also encourage a certain amount of discussion about the play afterwards their services would be still more valuable. It cannot be sufficiently emphasised, however, that the ground would have to be carefully prepared first of all, particularly in Youth Groups, and that such play-reading groups would have to restrain themselves from being too eclectic in their choice of material in the early stages.

In the play-reading circle, however, no less than in the acting group, it is the play that is the thing, and one of the great delights of play-reading is that the members are not hampered in their choice by the problems of 'actability', expense of production and all the other bogeys of the amateur

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

dramatic group. Moreover, play-reading gives one an excellent opportunity to study groups of plays—and to study the drama, and the history of the drama in our own and in other countries.

Whether one is dealing with music or with drama, one has an excellent opportunity to link it with attempts to gain at least some emotional understanding of other countries. One can never feel quite the same towards Russia, for instance, if one knows something about the attitude of Russia towards the artist, if one knows something about Russian plays and Russian films. A great deal of our lack of understanding of the French is due to the fact that we do not understand the French quick wit and biting realism. A study of the French stage is a great help to an understanding of the way in which the French mind works. But the range is infinite. There is all the fascinating material about the Chinese theatre and the 'No drama' of Japan, and the two types of Indian theatre. All this can be linked together.

No other subject, perhaps, lends itself more readily to a study of humanity from every angle, and in the emotional education of the drama one has infinite scope for the satisfaction of those 'immortal longings' which are both the penalty and the pride of being alive.

Much that has been said about the value of dramatic work can be equally claimed for music. But here again a great deal of the preliminary work has to be done extremely cautiously. In this field, however, Dobson and Young have done an amazing piece of work in showing us ways in which it is possible to persuade people that music is for everybody and is a part of everybody's equipment and inheritance.

Less unconventional in their approach, those two great bodies the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust and the Council of Arts have done much to make music accessible to large numbers of people. In its early days one of the most touching enterprises of the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust was that of providing organs for churches and chapels which might otherwise have been unable to afford a good instrument. Another was that of publishing music which, though good, might not have found favour with a commercial publisher,

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

who inevitably has to be at least as interested in sales as he is in music. It is possible that much of the work done by the Council of Arts and much of the willingness to listen found by Dobson and Young was due to the immense amount of spadework which had been carried out for many years by the music policy of the Trust in all parts of the country, particularly in rural areas. The activities of such individuals and bodies as these, and the far-sighted policy of many Education committees, such as that of the Manchester Corporation which makes a grant of £12,000 a year for the Hallé Concerts Society, £2,000 of which is earmarked for children's concerts, all these have created a potential audience, but there are still those who are not yet in a fit condition to start either serious concert going on the one hand, or making their own music on the other.

At the special request of the Ministry of Labour, the Council of Arts provided free concerts during the war years in factory canteens—generally during the lunch-hour break. The usual arrangement was for three artists—maybe a singer, violinist and pianist—to give a twenty-five to thirty minute concert of solo and concerted pieces. The workers had generally finished their lunch by the time the concert began, and were quite free to leave the canteen or stay for the music. Great care was taken to see that the programmes were at the same time popular and of high standard. Some of the favourite composers at these concerts were Handel, Gounod, Mendelssohn, Rimsky-Korsakov and Vaughan Williams. By 1943, an average of ten concert parties were engaged on these factory tours. In spite of the great and increasing demand for concerts of this type, a factory could seldom receive more than one every three months; nevertheless the audiences for these concerts cannot have been far short of one and a half million people.

It has been a most moving experience to attend some of these factory concerts. One calls to mind a typical example in the Midlands—the usual large canteen, the hundreds of workers of all ages and both sexes, the clatter of crockery and cutlery, the groups of women knitting and chatting, the groups of men arguing the world to rights, the solitary misery

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

plotting his football results, the sad-eyed girl writing an air-graph. The manager announced the concert, and introduced the artists—there was a certain amount of quiet for the opening item, a pianoforte solo, but no more quiet than one would get in a fashionable concert hall. A man started his song, a lovely Scottish ballad. Gradually the misery pushed away his paper, sat back and closed his eyes, and the canteen became still until the time came for applause. The woman soloist began the aria from *Madame Butterfly* in the sort of voice that is almost too pure to be of this earth—the girl looked up from her airgraph, the boy (he could not have been more than sixteen) looked up from his paper-bound book, the two girls (obviously fast friends who had been conversing in undertones about what ‘he said to her and she said to him’) stopped, and gazed at the singer open-mouthed. A young man and woman sitting together clasped hands under the table, a frightened little kitten ran mewling under a table, and the sort of man you would instinctively avoid annoying picked it up and soothed it quietly. The song ended, and there was a burst of applause. Before the spell could be completely broken the singer began again—‘Ave Maria’—and a sigh, a definite, moving, soul-born sigh went up from the vast and now rapt audience. Over a thousand people of all sorts and kinds, of every background and education, were lifted out of themselves into a world where music brought them a glimpse of religious ecstasy. The music stopped, there was that moment of deathly silence which is man’s tribute to the highest moment of his artistic experience, and then loud and louder applause. The concert was over, people began to disperse. One broad and very plain woman of fortyish turned to her companion and said: ‘Ee, it does you good somehow.’ A group of men broke up—‘See you on the bus,’ said one to the other. ‘That was a bit of all right, wasn’t it?’ ‘You know, luv,’ said an old man near the door, speaking to me just because I happened to be there, ‘everyone’s the better for a bit of the best—we’ve ’ad a laugh and we’ve ’ad a cry, and we feel the better for it.’ *What* a motto for adult education—‘everyone’s the better for a bit of the best’, and the recipe—a laugh and a cry—such being the emotional range of man.



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

It is true that the musical highbrow would have called the programme very small beer, but the musical highbrow always behaves as though there were two ways of disliking music—to vary the Oscar Wilde quip—one being just to dislike it, and the other to like light classical music.

One of the main obstacles to musical education is the music lover, who unlike the drama and picture lover seems to want to preserve music for the small coterie. There seems to be a feeling among the musical that music is so sacred that no-one should come near it unless he knows all about it, though how one is to get to know all about it without going near it is not explained. One is allowed to go near a picture and enjoy it without being pushed off the pavement because one may not know all about the artist or the 'school' of painting; one is allowed to read a poem, and even quote it, without being scorned if one does not know everything else that that particular poet wrote. But the music lover scorns you if you don't know the music and dismisses it as 'popular' if you do. 'I know,' wrote one young man, 'that we will never be able to walk together in the fields of music. Last night as we were at dinner a violin in the distance began playing the opening bars of Delius's Sonata No. 2. I looked at you—but you did not recognise it, you did not even hear it. We will never be able to share music with one another.' What utter rubbish! The writer was not a poseur—his musical education was both wide and deep, and his love of music beyond question. But just imagine anyone writing or even thinking this sort of thing because an unfortunate woman did not grasp a literary allusion ('We will never be able to read poetry together') or because someone did not recognise a Laura Knight in a flash ('We will never be able to look at pictures together'). No, the music lover will persist in regarding music as something more sacred than any other art—and he is so precious and so sensitive about it all that many who might enjoy music get impatient or else depressed because they are always hurting his feelings.

Because a man enjoys a good 'who-done-it' no-one assumes that he is necessarily unable to read Greek, but if a man enjoys Gershwin's 'Rhapsody in Blue' or Spike Hughes's



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

'Donegal Cradle Song' he is for ever suspect in the eyes of the musical.

The popularity of swing and jazz, the popularity of such programmes as 'Music While You Work' and Vera Lynn's programme, have given the highbrow and those who wish to feel themselves superior, ample opportunity to say that people do not like 'good music'. But there is no such thing as good or bad art, since art is skill and there can be no such thing as unskilled skill. There is only art, which is more valuable or less valuable to an infinite variety of human beings. As one young person writes:

'My idea is, that there are two kinds of music: (1) Classical and (2) the other, which nearly all goes under the popular heading of jazz. The former I will leave alone. I greatly admire the players, the conductors, etc., who perform a classical piece of music in the heavy style, and I appreciate that their skill is of the best, but I DON'T LIKE THAT MUSIC.

'Now "jazz" is different. Jazz is in the popular sense of the word to quote Duke Ellington—"usually a chatty combination of instruments knocking out a tune"—and it covers to my mind all such music as swing music, hot music, sweet music and boogie-woogie, which, I stress, is definitely music.

'The world has changed since the time of our mothers and fathers, and so has music. Young people (that's us) want rhythm, something "go-ey", and they feel in this music of today something that stirs their very blood and brings out their natural vitality. Examples—jitterbugging and jive.

'Hot music—a jam session, is music in its purest state, where instrumentalists each bring out music from the very soul without any musical notation to work from. Sweet and swing express the very sentiments of the younger people of to-day, and boogie-woogie gives out a rhythm which makes one beat fingers, feet, pencil, or what-have-you to show the feel of it. All these are extremely popular with us, the younger people of to-day, and all critics should be careful to consider us before they criticise our music. I revel in it, and so do many thousands of others.'<sup>1</sup>

The fact is that a lot of these young people who are devoted

<sup>1</sup>*Kent Club News*, Vol. 1, No. 4.

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

to swing or jazz are a very much better listening audience than those people who know that it is more socially correct to like classical music. Many young people who listen to various jazz orchestras listen with the most acute concentration and intelligence. They can tell you how the various musical compositions are built up. They know when to expect the trombone. They know what another virtuoso would be able to do with the saxophone. They know the difference between white jazz and negro jazz. They can tell you without a moment's hesitation whether they are for the Earl or for the Duke! They have a trained ear for one type of music (even if it is self-trained) and a great many of them are very willing to listen to other people's 'fancies' if the opportunity is presented to them in a friendly spirit rather than in one of condescension or even of disapproval.

Swing has been defined as 'a more or less vocalised personal instrumental expression whose melodic and harmonic cells . . . move in strains and extend syncopation in subtle momentum which are the product of suspended rhythm'.

Heaven knows what this means—but young people who are students of swing and jazz know—and as it is the sort of language which the critic of classical music would also seem to be at home in—it should surely provide some common ground! Any young adult who can talk this language is surely someone who could be introduced very easily to other sorts of music.

It is extremely unwise to attempt to suggest to young people that swing is not important, that jazz is not important. They need encouragement to be selective in this music which does appeal to them, before one tries to make them selective in the type of music which does not have the same appeal. It is true that anyone brought up on a diet of jazz music has a limited musical experience, but the person who has a diet of nothing but classical music has a limited experience too. The history of the whole thing from the folk spirituals, the revival hymn shout and the blues to dance forms and music for public occasions like marriages and deaths and even advertising, is a fascinating study. The development of white jazz is every bit as interesting as the discussions on folk music

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

in *Country Magazine*, and indeed it *is* the same thing. The 'coding contents', which are competitions in improvising, have their parallel in the Penillion singing and the Englynion singing of Wales (another form of improvising, using incidentally the same type of transposition of the function of voice and music). Indeed, a study of the negro musical expression in which young people *are* interested can very well be an introduction to a study of other types of folk music and the folk music of other lands. On the whole, young people are very much more tolerant than their elders give them credit for being, and a group who have listened rapturously to negro spirituals will listen with equal rapture to Russian folk songs and learn them too.

Many groups of young people have started their emotional education through music from their interest in dancing. One girls' club has a most fascinating collection of what they call 'dance tunes'—from the minuet to the blues, from Russian dances to Javanese—and they can talk about them intelligently and sensitively.

The trouble is that, thanks to all the poseur's nonsense, a good many boys feel that only 'cissies' like music and that classical music is dull 'because people who want to make out they are better than others pretend to enjoy it'. The soulful attitude of the average music lover who puts on a 'listening to good music' face, and even some of the more soulful radio announcers, are enough to put off anyone who has really healthy emotions. The result is that young people divide music into the jolly sort and the bubble-and-squeak sort. They are further intimidated by the fact that you hardly dare to pronounce the names of the bubble-and-squeak sort without revealing your ignorance at every syllable.

They feel better when they learn that Toscanini used to be paid several hundred pounds a night for just one single concert. That is impressive. That is real. Even these nitwits with the solemn faces must at least think there is something there before they'd *pay* all that for it. It may seem a rather low method of approach, but wasn't it Shaw who once said that one should never despise people's interest in money-making since on the whole there are few occasions on which people

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

are less sinfully employed than when they are making money!

It is not unhelpful to point out that military bands, in spite of their quite obvious manliness, seldom play jazz. If all other music was effeminate soldiers would surely not lend themselves to it! In a flourishing mothers' club which met once weekly in the afternoon and had a membership of close on two hundred, it was found that 88 per cent of the women declared that their husbands always insisted on listening to the Brass Band programme on the radio. It would seem as though even from childhood, when the small boy will follow a brass band for miles, this liking is inherent in the male.

It is the virtuosity of Eskdale playing Haydn's Trumpet Voluntary that appeals to the average boy. It is the bassoon, the oboe and the French horn which cause the most interest if one shows young people a set of Curwen's Orchestral Cards, which illustrate and describe the instruments of an orchestra. These cards are invaluable for introducing people to the instruments of the orchestra, especially if they are used in conjunction with the H.M.V. records called 'The Instruments of the Orchestra' and with, if possible, the additional ones displaying the music of the violin, viola, 'cello, bass flute, piccolo, clarinet and trombone.

Since this is a machine-minded generation, many young people can be interested and pursue a coherent musical theme through a study of different instruments and 'how they came to be just that shape'.

One of the most amazing Sundays I have ever spent was in rather a tough boys' club. Somebody was supposed to arrive for a 'musical afternoon' and everybody thought—indeed, hoped—that the man who came would be a tough he-man who would play a lot of rollicking tunes on the piano.

Two quite other-worldly looking people arrived—a man and his wife, both frail, gentle-voiced, unassuming people, who almost crept on to the platform followed by some willing helpers who handed up a collection of extraordinary-looking instruments. The two of them had collected curious and old instruments over a period of many years, and the hearts of

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

the organisers failed as they made up their minds to an afternoon's academic discourse on ancient instruments punctuated by shuffles, if nothing worse, from the young audience.

Nothing of the kind. The man started to speak in his rather gentle voice but what he said was an adventure story of collection, and we are all collectors at heart. (There is something wrong with people who haven't collected stamps or pictures or pieces of string at one time or another in their lives.) His talk was punctuated by the performance of odd or gay little tunes on the instruments, played either by himself or by his wife. The next thing we knew was that it was five o'clock and a somewhat irate canteen manager had already pressed into the hands of the club leader an indignant note about tea having been kept waiting for the last quarter of an hour.

There might even be a musical revival in England, if every piano in every private house were chopped up for firewood and if for a period of twenty years all the would-be piano players had to content themselves with another instrument—an instrument which they could carry about.

There are one or two boys' clubs in the country that have been able to beg, borrow or otherwise procure sets of brass band instruments. In an area where there already exists a brass band tradition there seems no reason why an existing adult band should not be persuaded to form, encourage and train a junior band. In areas where there is already some scheme of instrumental classes in the secondary and erstwhile senior schools there is a certain growth of instrumental playing already; but there is much too much piano and strings and quite a number of people who are on the one hand a little shy of appearing effeminate, or on the other a little dubious of their ability, are much more suggestible if they are offered such an instrument as the recorder, the trombone, the drum, the harmonium, the accordion, the banjo or the guitar, with (as a last resort for the unconquerably diffident) the triangle. Bells may be all right in the infants' school, but the average adolescent will not shake them. That is why one is extremely sceptical about the value of the percussion band in adolescent groups, though the adult will enjoy it.



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

However much one may despise the tendency to turn the works of great composers into popular songs and dance tunes, one cannot fail to realise surely that many young people have been introduced to Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata from hearing it in the film of that name. The film *Dangerous Moonlight* popularised the Warsaw Concerto; the Nutcracker Suite popularised Tchaikovsky; and even if the version is a highly coloured one it cannot fail to be more easy on the ear if the milkman delivers the milk to the melody of 'An Eighteenth Century Drawing Room' than to the opening bars of 'Mairsy Doats and Doasy Doats'.

Indeed, there is a great deal of common starting ground through a study of the music of the radio or the film. There must be few people to whom the Warsaw Concerto is unfamiliar, and the same holds good for Schubert's 'Ave Maria', the songs sung by Paul Robeson, the Strauss waltzes and the two arias 'One Fine Day' and 'Your tiny hand is frozen'. All these have been made part of people's musical experience through the radio and the film.

The popularising of any classic, whether in art or music or literature, is no bad thing even if a little is lost in the process. A very good answer was given to this whole question once in a Brains Trust when a member of the group said that these musical adaptations should be compared with picture postcards of a lovely beauty spot. Obviously the best way to appreciate the beauty of the beauty spot is to see it, but everyone is not fortunate enough to be able to make the journey. Therefore surely one need not deny whatever pleasure the postcard may give to those less fortunate. It is idle to say that everyone *could* hear the music in its unadulterated form. So they could, if in no other way through the medium of the radio, but if one is unaccustomed to making the journey to the realms of classical music one is not strong enough to undertake the expenditure of intense listening and concentration which it demands. One has to be introduced to it gently, and these very adaptations have time and again been the means of encouraging people to make the effort to listen to unadapted versions later on.

If one cannot, however, get people to sing or to play, they

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

can be persuaded to listen, and listening, like other things, should never be called 'mere'. Indeed, to listen properly, intelligently and intently is by no means a common talent. There are quite a number of music clubs in youth centres and clubs—one has even discovered them in working men's institutes, and on one occasion in a public house—where perhaps only two or three of the group would admit to being able to play or to sing. These music clubs exist to feed their members on gramophone records, radio listening, and talks.

One group, which has now built up a gramophone library of hundreds of records, started off in a very humble way. Everyone brought a record and as the weeks went by these records were played and listened to by the group. The only proviso was that everyone should say something about the record he had brought when it was played. As can be well imagined, the variety and range was astonishing. There were a great many records of Gilbert and Sullivan choruses and when these were played the members joined in and sang them. This gave the group an idea. They invited people to come in and sing some of the solos or play some of the instruments. The manager of the local music shop was roped in. A study was made of the music of the film and this particular group now has a very interesting collection, among other records, of Walt Disney film music.

The great difficulty with most listening groups is the matter of equipment. One needs to have not only a gramophone but a radio-gramophone, a plentiful supply of records and a piano, if one is going to do the thing properly. A portable gramophone is all very well to start with, but once people start listening in real earnest it simply will not do. The other piece of equipment that is essential, of course, is at least one gramophone enthusiast, and even the listening must be related, at least in the beginning, to the life of the people who composed the music or who were the chief exponents in conducting, playing or singing it. In all branches of emotional education it is impossible to carry on successfully if one ignores the personal element.

One must not forget, however, that community singing is quite often a form of music making, though not always of

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

the high standard one could wish. There is a deep-seated emotional reason why people at football matches and in any large crowd will indulge in spontaneous music-making, and just because it is a universally possessed musical instrument one must not overlook the possibilities of the human voice.

But it seems a pity that a little of the attention paid to singing could not be paid to instrumental work. It is always so astonishing to find that even in Wales, the land of song—a land where the people without knowing a note of music (which should be to their shame rather than their pride) can harmonise a tune in five or six different parts—there is no greater number of instrumentalists than in any other part of the country.

Yet it is amazing where the good exponent of community singing can take a group. For instance, Reading has successfully brought together many hundreds of music lovers both young and old to community music-making through Sunday evening singsongs. It began as a war-time means of giving an opportunity for evacuees, lonely people and members of the Forces to enjoy an hour's singing together in a spirit of communal friendliness. At the very first meeting a group of over a thousand people came together to sing at the Town Hall. Reading had the great fortune to be encouraged and stimulated in this activity by Mr. Cyril Winn who is probably one of the foremost exponents of community singing in the country, and after a while a characteristic pattern of singsongs emerged: about half an hour's instrumental music, choral singing, a vocal soloist and a speaker. On one particular evening the programme consisted of an organ recital built up from requests sent in, for the most part, by members of youth organisations. The singing included both hymns and other songs and choruses, and a great deal of accompaniment was done with two pianos as a change from the organ. Moreover the audience was introduced to, and learned to know, a new tune, the oriental chorale from which the hymn 'All glory, laud and honour' is adapted, and they still wanted more!

Until, however, we have more musical people who will

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

give a hand to those who envy them their Paradise, and until we spend as much on helping people to make music as we spend on encouraging them to listen to it, the majority will walk wistfully in the back garden of the musical world—like Hamlet's friend they will cry, 'I have not the skill, my lord'—and no-one seems to care very much that this should be so.

For many people who dwell in the outer courts of religious experience, it is the other arts which can help to introduce them to a deeper religious life. One cannot have organised a music group for very long before one comes to the great religious music of the ages. (Indeed one cannot sing at a football match for long without turning to hymns.) One cannot encourage any study of the drama without eventually coming to a study of the origin of the drama, which like the dance is found in the heart of all great religions. Once one embarks on an adventure in search of goodness, truth and beauty, that great trinity of religious values, one cannot ignore the fact that those three great truths find their chief expression through the arts.

Among the Greeks, indeed, goodness, truth and beauty were all regarded as being exactly equal—and one cannot really have perfection in one of this trinity without the others—the whole balance and perfection is lost if one does.

Hence a study of the beautiful inevitably leads to a study of goodness and truth. There is a delightful Hindu legend which says that God gave four holy Vedas for teaching man wisdom. But all of them were much too difficult for some people to follow, so Brahma created a fifth Veda, the Veda of the theatre, of art and of dancing, so that this path could be trodden by the majority of men.

Quite naturally, therefore, one of the most fruitful fields for pursuing the wisdom of the ages is through a study of dancing. For though the average human being is a natural philosopher at fifteen or so, he needs to philosophise from what he knows.

Indeed, Dobson, of Dobson and Young fame, is very fond of saying that music to many people means 'feet music'. But there is no reason why a group of people who have started

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

to take their dancing and their dance music seriously cannot be brought to a study of the dancing of other countries and other ages. Inevitably any such discussion must bring them to the point of asking 'Who started it?' It is a most satisfactory and promising line of approach to suggest to people whose love of rhythm has been fostered by their love of dancing, or by their love of 'music while you work', that this rhythm which they love so well is merely another evidence of that rhythm which is characteristic of everything in creation. They are astonished to realise that everything has its rhythm, the rhythm of the tides, the rhythm of the planets in their courses, the rhythm of the movement of the blood through our veins and the sap in the trees, and the rhythm of light, heat and sound.

It is possible that man's first religious impulse found its expression in the dance—the praising of God in the ritual of the dance which was not only an act of praise but an act of thanksgiving for life and joy in that life. It is probably not for nothing that in the history of superstition in so many countries and in so many ages the prejudice against moving widdershins (anticlockwise) or against the line of the dance is to be found. Relics of this superstition are to be found in curious places. The card player will not deal anticlockwise, the port must go round clockwise, and there are countless other regulation clockwise motions which are certainly almost instinctive but are probably linked up with this almost primeval respect for a traditional method of movement.

The history of dancing opens up an enormous field. Indian dancing, Javanese dancing, ballet dancing are all fascinatingly written up, and a most interesting course of study can be undertaken on the dancing of the Church. Among Hindus, Vataraja was the lady of the dance and the Deva-dasi, the dancing girl of India, is really a Hindu version of the name 'Bride of God'. In Japan the legend tells us that Ami-no-unana brought forth a son by dancing and the dancing girls were consecrated to a life of prayer and praise through the dance. In the West the same association between religion and dancing is found. The words orchestra, chorus, chorale, choir were all originally words for the dance. It is interesting to realise that



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

we have retained a remnant of this original meaning, in that 'chorus girl' always means a dancer. It is a commonplace, of course, to point out that the bourrée, the sarabande, the tarantella, the gavotte and the minuet, though now associated with a certain type of music, were really dances.

Again there are many references to dancing in the Old Testament besides that of David dancing before the Ark. It is interesting to realise that the migration of the Jews to Palestine between the two wars also brought with it a revival of their own particular dance. The carol was an old round dance which was performed at Christmas, and in *The Oxford Book of Carols* the places are marked where everybody joined hands and danced. There was quite a fair amount of dancing in church in mediaeval times, and even as late as the fifteenth century Dante pictures Christ as the centre of a circle of dancers. Even today there are one or two places where dancing and worship were one, at least until 1939. At the High Altar in Seville during Nativity and Holy Week and Corpus Christi, a dance was performed. And there is a delightful story of how, in the seventeenth century, various people tried to suppress the custom. Such an uproar resulted that a concession was made. The dancers were to be allowed to go on performing until the traditional clothes were worn out. A hundred years later the dancers were still dancing in the same clothes which had been exquisitely patched and mended through the years to the glory of God and His worship in the dance.

In Limoges Cathedral, a church which is under the patronage of St. Marcelle, during saints' days and certain other seasons of the year, a round dance was performed. At those seasons, instead of the Gloria patri at the end of the psalms, they sang 'St. Marcelle, pray for us and we will dance in thy honour'. It is well to remember that the correct translation of 'Is any man merry let him sing psalms' is really 'Is any man merry, let him dance' and that our present version is due to the prejudice of the translator. (Just as the prejudice of the translator is responsible in the Pussyfoot version of the Bible for 'Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples' becoming 'Stay me with raisins, comfort me

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

with apples'). St. Vitus' dance is well known to most people, but what perhaps is not so well known is that this particular saint was a *healer* of nervous diseases, not a sufferer, and his dance was really a curative one, a form of rhythmic exercises; and certainly until the beginning of 1939 his dance used to take place every year on his saint's day at his shrine in the Ardennes.

In Germany the Oberammergau play had its origin in the thanksgiving of the village for deliverance from a plague.

There are those who maintain that most round dances are religious in origin and that many of the so-called war dances and even snake dances were originally dances of praise. A study of this kind reveals endless possibilities. A study of the life of a famous dancer like Pavlova also has excellent material in it. Her dance of the Egyptian mummy for instance was based on the Egyptian ritualistic dances. In more modern times, the ballet of *Everyman* is another religious experience and a religious dance.

Perhaps everyone does not realise the close connection between such religious dances and religious drama. The whole of the Liturgy of the Church and the ceremonial of high mass is a dramatic experience. It is not only the comedy of manners, the entire play of ideas and the criticism of contemporary society which find their expression in dramatic form, but all the highest aspirations and prophetic utterances of people through the ages. The Greek drama was religious in origin, so was the 'No drama' of Japan. So is a great deal of Indian drama. In mediaeval times the liturgy of the Christian Church was extended by the morality play. It was in many ways a great loss when the play was driven out first of all into the churchyard and later into the village street, and we have a lot to thank T. S. Eliot and Miss Dorothy Sayers for, in bringing the play back into the church.

In all these things there is the religious aim of both satisfying the intellect and ennobling the emotions, and no-one could make a study of the dancing, music or drama of other countries without time and again coming up against the religious significance of a great deal of its history. When one realises the tremendous impetus that has been given to the cause of taking

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

drama to the people in recent years, it is interesting to note also that a large number of modern religious plays have been among the most successful productions. James Bridie is probably one of the best exponents of the religious drama after Miss Dorothy Sayers and T. S. Eliot, and as Ivor Brown, the dramatic critic, once said: 'His *Mr. Bolfrey* contains the best sermon one could wish to sit under' (a sermon in which the minister defends Calvinism). No matter what one may think of a play like Emlyn Williams' *The Wind of Heaven*, whether one belongs to the section of the audience which is uplifted by it, or to the section which is reduced to tears by it, or the section which is acutely embarrassed by it, one must admit that it does what all real informal education does, it makes you think, and in this case about the whole question of religious experience.

There are endless possibilities of using a study of literature as an introduction to a study of religion. It is difficult to be a poetry lover, difficult even to be well read as far as poetry and the novel are concerned, without coming to a study of great religious literature. It is interesting to observe that some of the most recent anthologies of modern poetry have a very high proportion of poetry which is praise, thanksgiving and prayer. A group of young people who became interested in this way spent a most fruitful evening comparing the account of the Creation in 'A Negro Sermon' by James Weldon Johns (a poem which was introduced to them through their interest in negro spirituals) with the account of the Creation in the Book of Genesis and with Milton's 'Creation's Hymn'.

In all this study of religious poetry and religious literature there is a great deal to be said (as there is in so many departments of informal education) for proceeding backwards—beginning from the more modern expression of religious worship and comparing it with that of other times.

Another interesting line of approach is through the various parables and miracles of different nations and faiths. In this connection *The Bible of the World* is invaluable. A delightful story like 'The Protection of God' or 'The Fisher Woman's Helplessness' or 'The Fortunate Woodcutter' has a distinction and freshness which often enable one to re-introduce the

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

more well-known parables of our own Bible. Moreover there are some delightful new parables and stories to be found in the works of the pre-Raphaelites, particularly, for instance, in the work of William Morris and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. The parable of the talents, for instance, or the text 'To him that hath shall be given', has new light thrown on it from an unexpected angle by a more recent parable of this kind:

'Men came to the sage with a bag of walnuts and said: "Divide this amongst us as well as God divides." So he gave to one five, to another fifty, and to another none. Then they said, "Oh thou! We said divide this well, as God divides, and see what thou hast done!" And he said, "Ye fools! Ye should have said 'Divide as the just man divides'." So each one got his own and went away.'

There is a great deal to be said for rewriting portions of the New Testament in psychological language, and in the war years a great deal has been done by many people to show how much of the work of the prophets had a bearing on the politics of the age. The British Council of the Churches gives an excellent example of how public information in the Near East under Moses, Aaron, Isaiah or Ezekiel can be announced by news bulletins such as the following:

'Great excitement was caused in North Palestine this morning when the prophet Ezekiel interrupted worship in the royal chapel to make a propaganda speech. Before he could be ejected he had denounced as immoral . . . the economic system of the Jewish state. . . . Later in the morning the Lord Amaziah, chaplain to the king, issued a statement to the press deploring the suggestion that business and political practices should be judged by standards derived from religious morality. It is understood that Ezekiel has been sent under armed guard to the frontier.'

It is true, of course, that the Kingdom of God is within, but with so many people it is a very long way within, and has to be dug out very patiently. It is all very well to ask people to make a leap of faith, but as a rule they need a great deal of firm spiritual footing built up underneath them through the education of the emotions—through drama, literature and music—before they have a springboard from which they have

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE FEELINGS

the courage to take that leap of faith. Others build up that springboard from a consideration of social problems and from the strength they obtain from their own good works and the inspiration of the good works of others. But whether this springboard be constructed by active works or by emotional yearnings, some firm foothold we must have before we will venture the leap. And no way is less worthy than another, whether it is made by him

*' . . . who binds the sheaf  
Or builds the house or digs the grave.  
Or those wide-eyed that watch the wave  
In soarings round the coral reef.'*

The education of the feelings is often one of the supreme adventures of the human spirit, a slow direction of men and women towards power and beauty.



## IX

# THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

### Radio Listening; Discussion; Books and Libraries

*' . . . tired the sun with talking and sent him down the sky.'*

—CORY.

*' Words are wise men's counters and the currency of fools.'* —ANON.

For the majority of those who have left their schooldays and all formal education behind, the main approach to informal education through the ears is by the use of the radio. In 1939, two-thirds of the homes of Great Britain possessed a radio (one-third more than possessed a bath). For this reason, therefore, if for no other, the radio is one of the greatest potential forces of further education, and it would be a step in the right direction if we were all able to use it more sensibly. Broadcasting, like the film, has two main educational functions, the function of educating through the actual content of the programme, and the function of preparing people for further education. In just the same way as one needs to be educated *for* the film, one can be educated *by* the radio and one should be educated *for* it. One of the great advantages of the use of the radio in schools is that it should help people in their education for the radio in adult life. The chief difficulty about school listening, however, is that of its very nature it cannot give much practice in the matter of selection, though quite obviously it may serve to develop young people's radio taste. Teachers, indeed, have done a great deal, by encouraging their pupils to engage on some specially selected home-listening, to foster a higher standard of family listening.

As an educational medium, the radio has had a much better start than the film, because its tremendous potential value was realised in the very early days. The B.B.C. is required under

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

its Charter to conduct the broadcasting service 'as a means of information, education and entertainment' in that order, whereas it would probably be fair to say that in the film world the order has been reversed, or possibly changed altogether, since the film was first a means of entertainment, then of information and has only lately come into its own as a means of education. As early as 1923 an Education Advisory Committee was set up by the B.B.C. and in 1924 an Education Director was appointed. One of the most interesting documents, indeed, on adult education, is the B.B.C. report entitled *New Ventures in Broadcasting*, which was published in 1928 after an inquiry of some eighteen months' duration had been conducted by a committee set up jointly by the B.B.C. and the British Institute of Adult Education. Good reading as this report is, however, we find the old bogey of entertainment and its 'mereness' raising its hoary head. 'How are the apparently conflicting claims of entertainment and education to be reconciled?' asks the report. It is tempting to counter this question with another: 'Why have entertainment and education become divorced?' The B.B.C. has done a great deal in this matter of reconciliation, and oddly enough the reconciliation has been done best in the very heart of its education programmes, the Schools broadcasts, which always have a very high level of entertainment value, and are therefore truly educational.

*New Ventures in Broadcasting* frankly confesses that the radio is 'the most perfect method by which to conduct what has been described as "insidious education"'. It is amazing how much of the best education that one could possibly hope to get is being done behind the listener's back, so to speak, by exposing him to educational influences rather than deliberate teaching. The gems of literature are constantly presented to the public by methods ranging from dramatised versions to a critical presentation with or without quotations, from simple anthologies to biographies or a mixture of all these. The same thing has been done in rather a different way for music. Religious broadcasting has made its contribution, and so have the Brains Trust, the postscripts to the news, and the various commentaries. Between them the Kitchen Front and the Radio

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

Doctor had achieved no small amount of instruction on elementary dietetics, elementary cooking and positive health. Various scientific discoveries have been made at least partially plain to ordinary human beings by all sorts of by-the-wayish programmes, such as, to take a random example, that of the inside story of how razor blades are made, quite apart from the possibly less successful efforts made by an imposing galaxy of scientists. It is easy to sneer at the Brains Trust, and one would have to be almost inhuman not to be infuriated by it, but the fact remains that even this has given us a new educational technique and has probably done as much to promote mental curiosity as many a formal educational institution. The documentary broadcast has been in the main of as high an informative and educational value as the documentary film, and has occasionally reached a level of what can only be called classical radio. For instance, 'The Harbour called Mulberry' will probably be regarded for a long time to come as one of the finest documentaries in any language, conveying as it did a whole wealth of historical and technical fact, and a whole range of accurate information concerning the attitude of Admirals, Generals, big business men, concrete mixers and steel workers when they were all united by a sense of pride in the job which was on hand.

Just, however, as the ordinary man and woman, and particularly the young adult, is becoming increasingly suspicious of the newspaper, which is dismissed as 'all propagandas anyway', so a similar suspicion is beginning to affect radio listening. There was a time when any argument in a public house could be brought to a triumphant conclusion by the assertion, 'I saw it in the paper'. Later there came a time when 'I heard it on the wireless' was an equally telling and crushing argument. It is disturbing to notice that the radio is now more and more frequently suspected of being a put-up job, designed to condition one's point of view in a certain way. In moderation such an attitude has its healthy side, but there is reason for alarm when a growing number of people, because they cannot find any way of assessing the material poured out to them, tend to discountenance all of it. The suspicion that they are being 'got at' is so prevalent that one sometimes

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

wonders whether there will come a stage at which it will be essential to conduct a veritable mission to convince people that unbelief is not necessarily a sign of intelligence. After all, the girl who is never taken in is never taken out!

It is for this reason that some education on the way in which radio programmes are produced, the very way in which the material is collected, is long overdue. People must become alive to the necessity of preserving the B.B.C. as an instrument for information and education rather than for propaganda, however good. One of the primary sociological duties of our time is that of overcoming passivity; but passive resistance is no less dangerous than passive acceptance, and it would be a thousand pities if this suspicion of the film, the radio and the Press were to reach such proportions that all their educational value was lost because of this over-defensive attitude.

The more highly centralised and highly controlled agencies for education in a democracy become, the more essential it is to realise that full use can only be made of them if people are convinced of their integrity, and unless the integrity of any educational medium can be preserved it becomes an abuse. There is great need for people to know exactly who the power behind the throne is (if there is such a power) for any educational medium to which they are exposed. Dictatorship is always dictatorship, whether it be benevolent or not, and if dictatorship there must be, it is infinitely preferable that it should be a physical rather than a mental one. True, the danger is often exaggerated, but because of this exaggeration, because such exaggeration militates against the proper and full use of our most important instruments for further education, it is essential that the public should know what happens behind the scenes.

There are those pessimists, however, who say that any education through the radio is practically impossible owing to the distractions of the ordinary home, the very fact that the radio is used as background, the fact that people knit and sew to it.

At the same time they rather weaken their case by asserting that in any event it is impossible to do much education through the radio because of the short span of any programme (the usual span for any talk or discussion is about 20 to 30

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

minutes). They say that education of this kind, if one can call it education at all, gives people mere snippets.

One would have thought that if the distractions of the home were really almost insurmountable, it was fortunate that the programmes were short, since it is surely easier to get quiet for 20 minutes than for longer. By the same token, it would then be possible to get more benefit from the short programme, than from programmes of longer duration.

However, even if the critics admit that there is some faint possibility of receiving a certain amount of education through the radio they are apt to make the would-be crushing retort that there is very much too much casual listening, and that since few people plan their listening few get any real benefit from it. If one admits, however, that a great deal of one's informal education is purely incidental, one finds that most of these objections have very little real weight.

It is undeniable that large numbers of people turn on their radio as if it were a tap, and leave it running all day, as a background to everything that they are doing, saying and thinking. There are even those young people who declare that they can do their homework better—can concentrate better—to a background of music. To some people, indeed, the background of music has become almost an essential—but before we condemn this entirety it must be remembered that owing to the Government sponsorship of 'music while you work' large numbers of factory and process workers of all kinds have been encouraged to carry on in difficult times and for long hours. If they have become so used to background music in their working hours, it is not for us to criticise, if they feel lost without it in their leisure hours. Moreover, however anxious one may be that everyone should make the greatest possible use of the radio as an educational medium, like every other art it has also the duty of making life possible. As the industrial worker engaged on monotonous jobs is helped by 'music while you work' so is the busy housewife in her multifarious monotonous jobs. Many a woman finds the necessary consolation prize for turning out a room, or tidying drawers, in the background of fun and gaiety that the radio provides. If others find it in a gloomy silence, compensated for later by posing as a martyr to



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

the rest of the family—that, too, is their affair. Nevertheless, when the academic listener-in passes down a row of dreary houses all pouring forth melody of some sort he might smile occasionally at the thought that the radio is brightening people's lives instead of always frowning at the 'tap-listening'. Above all, it is well to remember that just as a certain amount of wool-gathering occasionally enables people to bring home the golden fleece, so a certain amount of casual listening sometimes brings people quite unexpected pleasures and delights. For instance, those responsible for the 'To Start You Talking' programmes would probably be prepared to admit that in the earlier days at all events a great deal of the surprisingly large listening audience built up for those broadcasts was due to the supreme good luck of their timing. They came on the air just before the 'Itma' programmes, and many groups were first introduced to the 'To Start You Talking' method of discussion by accidentally turning the radio on a little too soon. Hearing something that tickled their fancy determined them to have a penn'orth more of that next week.

Such an example could probably be multiplied many times. It is an undeniable fact that many people, particularly children, are astonishingly acute and able listeners. It would be impossible to estimate how many thousands of children and young people, apart from adults, receive a vast store of general knowledge and information by this very casual listening that so many people unite to condemn. It is indeed a very noticeable fact that a great many of us have had our ears definitely sharpened by the radio, as we have had our eyes quickened by the films. A far larger number of people, for instance, seem to be more sensitive to tones and overtones in the human voice and to variation in sound than they used to be. Just as the traveller on a long journey lets a great deal of the scenery slip past his eye, and yet retains some beautiful piece of landscape in his mind's eye, so the tap-listener may retain far more than we imagine. All is not necessarily lost because all is not selected and planned—while a great deal may be lost, as dictators of no less eminence than Hitler have discovered, if too much emphasis is laid on planning and selection.

It is indeed very easy to underestimate the amount of real

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

listening that goes on. We are all apt to imagine that we are the only people who read newspapers intelligently, appreciate music or art properly—and that people who arrange their reading or their listening rather differently from us are necessarily getting less out of it than we are!

After all, most of the occupations which people are doing to the radio are mechanical operations; they are possibly as helpful in keeping people still, and keeping them from a variety of other distractions, as they are likely to be distracting in themselves. Moreover, most people can hardly have failed to notice how the knitter and the embroiderer will abandon the work, if it begins to demand that they should count stitches, in favour of any programme that really grips them. It is the business of the educationist, whether on the radio or the platform, to *deserve* attention. Who is he anyway that he should demand it—and at one's own fireside too! Writers and lecturers have for too long assumed in their arrogance that it is we who are wrong if we can't concentrate—surely sometimes it isn't our fault?

The supreme advantage, of course, of radio education is that one need not go out to get it. This is a matter of great importance to those who live a long way from their work and who, when they at last reach home, like to stay there. It is a great advantage also to parents with young children who cannot possibly go out much in the evening, and particularly to mothers who cannot attend much in the way of formal or informal instruction in the day-time.

It would indeed be possible to argue that the radio has great potentialities as a means of preserving the family unit and ensuring family education. Just as the cinema is undeniably directly responsible for a great deal of the decrease in drunkenness (since many people formerly frequented public houses because there was nowhere much else to go), so the radio is probably responsible for keeping many a family together in the evenings. It is possible to be very funny about the differing tastes and demands of the family radio group. But were one to set up as a retailer of radios, the slogan: 'Buy a Radio and Keep Your Family at Home', would have the advantage of being truer than many an advertisement catchphrase.

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

On the whole the radio caters for the large middle stream—not the too highbrow on the one hand, nor the witless on the other—and many a programme instructs and amuses groups other than those for which it is primarily intended. It is interesting to notice, for instance, even from the most casual remarks, how many mothers listen to the school broadcasts; to find out how popular such series as 'How Things Began' or 'The Changing World' or even the 'Sixth Form Talks' are among women; to discover how many parents find, in these, topics for conversation with their schoolboys and girls. The Children's Hour is listened to with delight in many a childless home. Just as the adult often seems to get more pleasure than the children themselves from such books as A. A. Milne's Christopher Robin series, or *The Sword and the Stone*, which are ostensibly for children, in the same way the children's section of the radio brings a great deal of pleasure to many an adult. Since, moreover, the school broadcasts and children's programmes are some of the most imaginative programmes put on the air, it would be by no means unfair to suggest that both children and adults receive pleasure and instruction from them—a proposition which is strengthened when one remembers that the average mental age of the adult is not much higher than that of the age group for whom most of these programmes are intended.

As for the objection that radio education comes in snippets of 20 to 30 minutes at the most—well, this is an age of 'digests'. It might even be argued that there is so much that we must know if we are to keep mentally agile in a constantly changing world that all we can hope to do is to keep abreast by the snippet method while specialising more, perhaps, in one particular field.

Furthermore, very little is known about attention span. We do not really know how long it is possible for the average person to concentrate on any one thing, and since any experienced lecturer knows that 45 to 50 minutes is all that can be expected of any audience (and even then a great deal of thought has to be given to revival of attention at stages during the speech), it may be that 20 minutes to half an hour is about right for a talker who is at the disadvantage of not being able to see how

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

his audience is reacting to what he is saying. After all, the live lecturer can change his method of attack if the attention of his audience appears to be wandering. The radio lecturer can do no such thing.

It is not always realised, either, how great a strain it is on the imaginative or creative faculty to rely, as one has to do in radio, on the ear alone. Possibly, indeed, one of the great educational advantages of the radio is that it does exercise one's imaginative faculties in this way. Nevertheless, it is at least arguable that one could not go on listening imaginatively for as long as one can go on reading imaginatively, since in reading one can go at one's own pace, in lecturing the experienced lecturer can alter his timing, but in radio listening the pace is fixed and appreciation is either instantaneous or non-existent.

When all is said, however, in favour of a certain amount of casual listening—and in favour of a great deal of family listening—the fact remains that most of us would be all the better educated and entertained if we had a little more guidance over our radio listening.

Just as we have long come to feel that one of the chief duties of the educationist is to advise about reading, so the time has come when it is necessary to have some guidance about using the radio. The *Radio Times*, of course, gives one factual detail and a time-table, and 'Programme Parade' does its share, but something more than this is needed.

In this connection it would be unfair not to pay tribute to the magnificent pioneer work which has been done by the Central Committee for Group Listening, which was set up in 1934, and on which all the major organisations dealing with adult education are represented.

Whether by intention or otherwise, however, the chief result of the work of this committee would seem to be that adult education by broadcast has tended to become mainly concerned with discussion talks for listening groups. In this special field some excellent work has been done, and it is by no means fair to assess its value according to the number of formal listening discussion groups established, since many thousands more must have listened to and profited by these talks though they have never moved from their own firesides.

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

There is little inducement to do so indeed, since listening groups are hampered by having very few suitable places in which to meet, and by the fact that when places are available they are on the whole very unattractive. No man who has spent his day in the dust and discomfort which are an inevitable feature of much of the work of the world, wishes to spend his evenings in dingy and uncomfortable surroundings; no busy housewife wants to sit at a school desk not built for matronly figures, after a hard day's work.

It is to be hoped that the Community Centres, the County Colleges and above all the Libraries will see to it that film and radio equipment are 'laid on' as an essential piece of educational equipment. One has only to visit a building like the London City Literary Institute, with its attractive, well-lit classrooms, its library, concert hall, theatre (with proper tip-up seats), its common-rooms and gymnasium, to realise what could be done. In this Institute the furnishing and equipment have been deliberately designed to meet the needs and satisfy the tastes of adults, and the atmosphere is that of a dignified West End club rather than that of a school.

But much could be done on a slightly less self-conscious level. We are always talking about preserving and creating a neighbourhood spirit, about neighbourliness and the rest, yet we always seem to feel that we can preserve this neighbourliness by taking people out of their neighbourhood to do something elsewhere in a group. The very best examples of neighbourliness during the war years were not brought about through the central A.R.P. services, or even the W.V.S., but by street fire-watching parties. One could wish that someone with vision had seen to it that immediately the war was over numbers of those people who had organised street fire-watching parties had been urged to come forward as leaders of peace-time activities. They might have devoted the same zest to drawing up rotas of baby-minders (so that young married people could go out together sometimes in the evenings) and they might have organised neighbourhood activities such as street listening groups.

Most of us don't really want to go a long way away from home to listen to the radio in a group among people we don't know very well. We might be prepared, however, to listen in



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

small parties in one another's houses in the same street. Alternatively, just as the film group can go to the same film in small groups and meet together afterwards, so could the radio group meet for discussion after listening to the programme in their own homes.

It is much better in any case to keep listening groups as small as possible. Some of the most successful that one has seen in clubs and youth centres have been those in which a small portable radio is used, sometimes in the warden's office, or in the smallest room there is, in a crush where no-one can sit down properly, where instruction therefore seems both a feat and a privilege. One feels a fool listening to the radio in the company of a large crowd of people, particularly if they are sitting in rows. The feeling of intimacy, one of the radio's most precious qualities, is entirely lost if one listens in a gathering of people with whom one is not entirely at ease.

Everyone is enchanted by the expert who talks to them personally, who seems to have taken the trouble, as Churchill seemed to do during the darkest days of the war, to come into one's very home and quietly discuss a problem with one. Such intimacy promotes a feeling of friendship, and everyone needs what can only be called an impersonal personal friend. It is impossible to achieve this feeling of intimacy in the company of about fifty other people.

One of the main reasons why such people as the late John Hilton and C. H. Middleton, J. B. Priestley and the Radio Doctor have made such contributions to education by radio has been just because they make personal friends with each listener. They make each listener feel that he matters—that his problems are important.

This quality of intimacy is perhaps the greatest attraction of such programmes as the Vera Lynn series and the rest of the Forces' sweethearts, or such features as 'Thank you for your letter'—no matter what one may think of their content. In these series there was always a sporting chance that *your* name or your *letter* might be mentioned. Consequently you listened intently and regularly. Hence this intimacy is a very real aid to both continuity and concentration. It is not unlikely that if sufficient people came forward to form street listening groups,

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

and if one could have a sort of street listening group 'corner', or street listening group 'hour' on the radio, it could form a most interesting device for ensuring an audience for educational programmes of some continuity.

Just as anyone can send in a question to the Brains Trust, it might be arranged that properly registered street groups were allowed to send in a 'street problem', while through the device of exchanging advice street groups might be put in touch with one another over the air. After all this device was used in the 'Transatlantic Call, People to People' series, and there seems no valid reason why a street listening group in Leeds should not be put in touch with a street listening group in Evesham—to the growth of a greater civic consciousness and listening audience in both towns. Endless permutations and combinations of this arrangement crowd into the mind.

This feeling of intimacy, this feeling that somebody cares, is of especial importance to any educational work that is being attempted in rural areas.<sup>1</sup> One or two interesting experiments rather along these lines have already been carried out. In one case the B.B.C. co-operated with the local Youth Organiser, and about forty boys and girls were invited to a meeting where they talked about broadcasting. It was impossible for them to meet very often, since most of them came from isolated farms and villages, and the town dweller does not always realise how long journeys in rural areas cut into both ends of the night. It was suggested that each member of this group should listen to certain programmes and write in at the end of each week saying what he had listened to and what he had enjoyed or disliked. At the end of three months it was obvious that the quality of listening had improved, and many young people were beginning to listen to programmes they had previously ignored.

Again, the formation of a listening group often marks the birth of other interests. For instance, when a similar experiment was carried out in the Wallop villages of Hampshire, the listeners became so interested in one another that a cycling club was formed. Another group which used to listen every

<sup>1</sup>See N. & J. H. Higginson's *The Great Adventure*; Chapter 7, 'Applied Broadcasting'.

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

week to the 'At the Armstrongs' programmes were once much disappointed because their radio went wrong just before the programme was due to start. One of the gayer spirits said: 'Never mind, let's produce a programme of our own.' They allocated the parts of Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong and the family among their members, and performed a burlesque-cum-charade which led to the formation of a drama group which grew into a thriving child of this radio group. In this very programme, by the way, the feeling of intimacy was developed to such a high degree that to many listeners in different parts of the country the Armstrongs were real people, whose lives were followed with the greatest of interest, and many people were helped because the Armstrongs had to cope with the problems that beset them also. In all the complexities and difficulties of life it is some consolation to feel that others have their troubles too, and have, indeed, the same troubles. As one young woman said: 'If the young Armstrong girl can put up with her mother-in-law I'm blowed if I see why I shouldn't try to put up with mine.'

In the same way other groups who have listened to a series such as 'Living and Learning' have been stimulated to form a library group; others formed Savings Groups. Yet another listening group was stimulated into raising sufficient money to enable a small youth club to achieve financial stability, while a course on First Aid as an activity directly resulted from another group which listened to an account of the work done in the casualty ward of a hospital. These are but a few out of many examples of the way in which the informal education received through the ear can be a starting point of many other educational adventures.

There is seemingly endless discussion concerning the 'subjects' with which it is best to deal, but here as elsewhere the subject is really of minor importance, since any subject that can be adapted to the medium of radio can be a means of education. Possibly the alternating programmes with America during the war years have done at least as much to promote understanding between the countries as any meeting with real-life Americans. Armchair travel is always a fascinating method of learning about other countries; all the social sciences

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

lend themselves well to radio technique; and the dramatisation of history and biography have brought to the fireside of countless numbers of people a technique which was formerly denied to all but those who had the privilege of listening to such pioneers in the art of making the past live as G. G. Coulton.

But in informal education it is the approach through the personal problem which is always the most successful. The special broadcasts to young people are an excellent illustration of this. The 'To Start You Talking' series evoked much genuine interest and general enjoyment, partly because of the personality of Douglas Allen, a first-class broadcaster with a very long experience of getting on intimate terms with his audience, and partly because of the change of technique, which meant that one week you might be invited to listen to a guest expert, the next to hear a dramatised incident which postulated the problem, and the next to a sort of free-for-all discussion. But as far as the young listening groups are concerned it is probably most successful because the topics selected are in the main personal problems. A large proportion of these talks have been concerned with things young people want to know and discuss, but which for the most part they are too shy or too inarticulate to introduce for themselves. Some of the most successful starting-off points for discussion, therefore, have been provided by broadcasts about those personal relations and those personal problems which loom so large in adolescence, and cause such grave concern to the parents of adolescents. 'Why are some young people so backward in coming forward?' On the occasion of the broadcast of this title many young people in groups in various parts of the country were reported to have said: 'Gosh! that's me.' 'Why do we get browned off?' And can anyone, parents or anyone else, help about it? 'Do Accents matter?' 'What are the main problems on starting work?' These things are the very bones of citizenship, if one remembers that one of the essential duties of the citizen is that he shall be able to get on with other citizens. By relating the personal to the general, such radio talks can be a veritable education in 'civics without tears'.

The interest of so many parents in these broadcasts leads one to hope that the radio will take a far larger share in the whole



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

matter of parent education. There is, as has been said before, a great quickening of interest on the part of many parents concerning the problems which confront them in bringing up their children. The old attitude of: 'You can't tell me anything about bringing up children, I've buried seven,' is giving place very rapidly to an honest and earnest desire to receive any information which will help in the understanding of the growing child. Unfortunately this parent education is confined for the most part to occasional quarter-hour talks by anonymous medical psychologists at such crazy hours as 8.15 in the morning and 6.15 at night, hours when most mothers, however willing to learn, are compassed about with many other things. It is true that by sheer force of personality the Radio Doctor has cajoled us into thinking about our health and our diet at 8.15 in the morning, and Grandma Buggins even persuaded us to take down recipes at that grim hour. No-one, however, will make a space for that sort of thing more than twice in the week.

It does not need much imagination to realise, however, that many Parents' Associations would be greatly assisted by a series of radio talks at reasonable times. Such talks could form a basis for discussion, or could take up part of the time devoted to the parents' meeting.

However, it is not only the broadcasts that have discussion value which are educational. If a play-reading circle—why not a play-listening circle, a poetry-listening circle, a science magazine club, and so on?

In this matter of the informal education of the listener, it would be splendid to feel that as many experiments were being made in various forms of group listening work as possible. One wonders whether the B.B.C. should not organise a number of summer schools and week-end courses for would-be group leaders. It is true that admirable lesson notes are provided for group leaders, but having lesson notes is no guarantee that one knows how to use them. Many listening groups still suffer from the earnest type of leader who writes out all the questions so kindly provided by the B.B.C. on a blackboard and solemnly goes through them one by one at the end of the broadcast. This would provide excellent material for a Joyce Grenfell broadcast on 'How not to' conduct a discussion group; it has



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

proved itself an excellent way to kill actual radio education. One realises that it is a great deal to ask of an organisation which is primarily concerned with broadcasting, but an enormous contribution to adult education would be made if the B.B.C. could provide fairly large numbers of trained experts who would visit discussion groups from time to time. One or two Education Officers to each area is just not enough—nor quite the type of provision which is needed.

Still more could be done if very many more broadcasters were engaged who carried on a correspondence course with listeners. This need not necessarily be the sort of correspondence course which did much to kill the late John Hilton with overwork—but correspondence courses designed not so much to answer personal problems as to give further guidance in reading and listening to those who asked for it.

In connection with this, much has still to be done to further co-operation with libraries. In most matters it is the radio which introduces us to a subject, and the library which can make us more informed about it. Many libraries already do a great deal by making special displays of books dealing with subjects as they are broadcast, but the B.B.C. needs to issue a sort of companion journal to the *Radio Times* which, while not as selective as the *Listener*, should give people guidance about series of broadcasts and book lists and book reviews and more book lists.

Finally, it would seem as though development is necessary along certain other lines. In the first place, a great deal of research is needed into the whole question of attention span, and a great deal more research than has already been done into the question of suitable listening times. Secondly, although much has already been done to cheer up the programmes, there is still too much of the atmosphere of the superior intellectual taking time off to enlighten the half-wit, too much solemnity and occasionally too much pomposity. Even the Brains Trust becomes pontifical from time to time.

Again, there is a great need for many more alternative programmes. One knows that war conditions made the task of providing really adequate programmes an almost insuperable one. But it has always been a puzzling matter to decide why

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

a really suitable alternative to music on one wave-length is presumed to be music on another. There are moments when on scanning the *Radio Times* one wonders if there is not altogether too much music of every sort. While one would be the last to deny that the music lover should have his share of the programme, and that the radio has done much to educate people musically, there are, after all, other subjects.

Above all, it would be a tremendous advance if the B.B.C. would establish a record department, rather on the lines perhaps of the educational radio script and transcription exchange which operates from the United States Education Department, Washington. Because of the difficulties of arranging listening times which suit everybody many people are unable to listen to the very broadcasts which would suit them best. In many youth clubs, for instance, the 'To Start You Talking' programme is an impossible activity because it cuts right into the evening. The difficulty the busy mother finds in listening to broadcasts at the children's breakfast time or bedtime has already been mentioned. Such groups of listeners as the adolescent in the club, the parent in the Parents' Association, and the Sixth Form group, to name only a few, would value the opportunity of listening to the expert, the best mind on whatever subject it might be, if the talks were made available on records. Moreover, in the same way as the film as an educational medium is made doubly useful if one can see the film, then discuss it, then see it again, so many a radio programme would be doubly valuable if one could listen and then discuss and then listen again. One is told that the main drawback to making recordings is that of expense. It is quite clear that at first, at all events, the experiment would have to be tried with a limited number of broadcasts, but if one believes in a thing sufficiently expense is never a real drawback, while it is just nonsense to suggest that a corporation of such magnitude as the B.B.C. could not really solve the difficulties of copyright which might be involved.

Perhaps the next most important educational technique in an approach through the ears is that of the discussion group. Much was made of the discussion group in the war years, and

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

its success in Army Education centres, in National Fire Service groups and elsewhere, has caused many people to hail it as *the* new educational technique. This has resulted in many quite fantastic claims being made for it. The discussion group, like everything else, varies very much from place to place and from group to group and there is great danger in imagining that because people are discussing anything they necessarily know something about it.

It is equally erroneous to suppose that the discussion group technique has revealed the great and solemn truth that the blind can lead the blind. Discussion never is and never can be a substitute for factual information on the one hand, or for the inspirational value of an expert on the other.

We do not always realise the abysmal ignorance which is hidden rather than brought to light in many discussion groups. Many a youth group discussed post-war planning, for example, without realising for one moment that the continuance of controls is in itself a matter for discussion. In the Forces, again, one heard discussions on the Press where the fact that most newspapers had some kind of political bias, even if it was realised, was certainly not clearly expressed. An incredible amount of nonsense was talked about the Beveridge report, to take another example, because people did not consider at the outset the present distribution of the national income, while it would probably be a safe estimate to say that at least half the discussions on education do not clearly differentiate between equality of opportunity and equality of talent.

Informal methods demand careful preparation and the discussion group technique is not an exception to this rule. It is quite misleading to suggest that the discussion group is something which can be indulged in profitably if there is neither preparation nor information.

Too many of us are proud of having opinions concerning things, but an exchange of opinion, however interesting, is not at all the same thing as having informed judgement; indeed the less one knows of a subject the easier it is to have opinions about it. A great deal of discussion still resolves itself into numbers of people slamming shut their minds in one another's faces, and the main result of this is that the 'So What-ers' and

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

the 'Sez you' brigade come into their own, while the earnest seeker after facts is made to seem a dull dog. At the moment, therefore, while many groups, both adult and adolescent, have developed the discussion habit, the habit may be either a good or a bad one, and the type of discussion may vary from the kindergarten to the Sixth Form variety. It would probably be fair to say that we know a great deal about both these varieties, but that the technique of getting the kindergarten into the Upper Fourth is still a hidden mystery to all but the most practised discussion group leaders.

Many people, however, who are willing and anxious to try this business of education by discussion (of which they have heard so much) are faced with the fact that it is difficult to make their groups talk at all. 'I come', said one discouraged leader, 'from a part of the country where if people understand you and agree with you they say "Ah", and if they don't they say "Eh"—and you can't make much headway out of that.' Even in areas where people's vocabulary is a little more extensive than this, many a discussion group leader has a very difficult task to make people talk, and often when they do talk they don't say what they are really feeling because they are shy and too afraid of being laughed at.

Those of us who plunge gaily into discussion groups do not always realise how little talking (which is not chatter, gossip—or even quarrelling) goes on in many a home, nor do we realise how difficult many otherwise very competent people find it to express themselves in words. Indeed, a very great deal of frustration, incompetence and general failure in one's working life, and one's leisure life, arises from sheer inability to express one's meaning. Workshop managers in industry, the heads of departments of businesses of all kinds, complain that it is comparatively rare to find a person who is capable of making a simple report or explaining a simple process. The result is that a great many accidents and a great deal of inefficiency at work can be traced to this. Many a man has been tried out as a foreman and has been moved again because he could not give a report or give an order with anything like sufficient clarity. This inability to explain a simple process or an 'incident' led during the war years to the N.F.S. and A.R.P. taking refuge



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

in a certain jargon or patter which people could 'learn up' for reporting. A great deal of what can only be called 'policeman's English' is due to this same lack of vocabulary and the result is, as we all know, that no policeman ever walks, he must always proceed.

This difficulty in finding and uttering the right words (or finding *some* words which will do instead) leads to all sorts of complications—both pathetic and amusing.

A visitor to a police court on any day can amass illustrations of the agony suffered by numbers of worthy citizens who (even when they have no axe to grind) cannot express simply and clearly how something or other happened. But one does not need to go to the police court. One has only to ask the way to the station to discover, not only how many people 'are strangers there themselves', but how many of the inhabitants presumably never use the station at all, since they are incapable of suggesting anything but 'bearing' either to the left or to the right. An overwhelmingly large number of people use their own language, indeed, as one should be taught to use a foreign one—they have built up a vocabulary of common objects and they have learned a series of phrases and clichés, and this meagre allowance, together with the wisecrack gleaned from the films or from the more popular radio stars, has to serve to carry them through all the emergencies of their lives.

Hence, the first task facing many leaders is that of encouraging people to become articulate without being too particular as to what they talk about or whether they keep to the point. For many, indeed, the first series of discussions really amounts to nothing more than practice in the art of using words.

In adult groups, the only way to accomplish this is to let them learn as they go along, but with adolescent groups it is often possible to help them to become articulate by a variety of different methods.

The method of talking about one's job has been mentioned already, but the simple and ancient device of telling stories is another useful beginning. After which, one can play those old-fashioned parlour games, such as that of beginning a story and allowing each member of the group to carry on at a certain stage in that story. One can encourage a group to tell in turn



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

their first memory, their most frightening or their most pleasant dream, and one can proceed from that to funny stories, though one must not mind how 'funny' the stories thus thrown up may turn out to be. One can go on from this to describing people one saw in the bus or conversations one overheard, and even to making up conversations or (if this is too difficult to begin with) making up one side of a telephone conversation and making the group guess what the other side was saying.<sup>1</sup>

It is true that talk of this kind does not get one very far in actual discussion, but there comes a time when one can proceed to discuss the stories and the characters in them. In any case the story, the memory, the dream supplies a basic material from which conversation arises naturally, whereas a more theoretical 'subject' merely dries up the fountain of what little vocabulary such a group may have.

With adults one cannot start as far back as this, and with the more sophisticated adolescents as well perhaps the two best methods of beginning discussion groups are by the interview technique or by definite public speaking classes (so-called).

One of the most interesting experiments in the practice of the spoken word is carried on in Westmorland, where each year the Young Farmers' County Committee holds a public speaking contest. The farmer is reputed to be the most inarticulate of an inarticulate race and one would have imagined there would be little or no response to such a venture. Those entering for the contest have a free choice of subject or they can speak on one topic from a list of eight suggested. Each contestant is expected to talk for not less than five minutes and not more than eight. The judges then question them on their speech. This helps them to decide whether the contestants have just learned something parrot-fashion or whether it is something which has become part of their own experience. It is reported that the contests are always well-attended and that the number of entrants is most encouraging.

Up and down the county of Westmorland for some time before the contest one can visit groups of Young Farmers

<sup>1</sup>Many helpful suggestions along these lines are to be found in Florence Surfleet's *What to Do in the Speaker's Class* (Headley Brothers, 2s. 6d.).

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

engaging in what in the old-fashioned school would have been known as 'oral composition'. Clubs are encouraged to hold local practices and they are offered expert guidance in speech training and in planning a talk. But these helpers do not rehearse two or three set subjects with the pick of the club members. They rather try to use the opportunity to get over the simple elements of good, clear, coherent speaking to the whole club and help them to stretch their minds at the same time.

A group of eighteen met in a dismal and small masonic hall which smelt of mice and in which one only knew the heating was 'on' because, on feeling them, the pipes were at about blood heat. Twelve of these young people had come distances of from two to fifteen miles after a hard day's work, and how far the three rather older people had travelled was not disclosed. After the business meeting and a certain amount of discussion about the contest, the person who had come to help them said that he was going to divide the whole gathering into teams of three. Each set of three was then given either a yellow, pink or blue paper. Each set was then asked to read their papers and, after some time had been allowed for consideration, to appoint one of the three as chairman, another as proposer of the vote of thanks, and another to deliver a speech on the subject matter on the paper. The whole group was then given hints on how to be a good chairman and how to propose a vote of thanks. Then the first team were asked if they were ready to perform. The chairman elected from the team of three took his place, the proposer of the vote of thanks on one side of him and the speaker on the other. It was then that the reason for the different coloured papers emerged. Each coloured paper contained a different story. The yellow papers consisted of extracts from *I Bought a Mountain* and set forth the pros and cons of fenced and unfenced mountains. Two teams had yellow papers, so both those teams retailed in their own words, through the mouth of their elected speakers, their version of this argument.

Then it was the turn of those teams with pink papers. The pink papers had been issued rather skilfully (as we then realised, to the younger members, and contained two short humorous

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

Russian stories of rural life. The speakers from these sets had to tell the stories in their own words. The blue paper contained some of the earlier experiences in farming of A. G. Street, which other teams in turn told in their own words.

In this way every one of the eighteen people had got on to his feet and had made some coherent remarks during the course of the evening, without any of the usual cajoling and persuading. By dividing them into teams in this way the organiser had managed to draw in everyone, not only the ready talkers. By having three different sets of material it was possible to give variety to the speeches and yet contrive a little element of competition in that at least two teams of people did the same thing. It was also possible to grade the teams quickly so that no section had anything too difficult for them to master. Furthermore, the typewritten document gave them some factual information to work on, but it was all drawn from that rural and farming life which was directly linked with their main interest and experience. Because, however, the material was drawn from some of the best literature on the rural life and scene, it introduced them all to new books, fresh ideas and to simple literary appreciation. They spent the evening, in fact, having an English lesson, but how informal was this adventurous approach.

Such a method could be adapted, however, for town groups—or any other special interest group—and a very interesting series of evenings could be arranged using related extracts on a variety of topics.

The interview technique has already been mentioned in Chapter V. This method can embrace the very simple type of interview in which questions are prepared beforehand and fired at the guest expert, or it can be based on the B.B.C. 'In Town Tonight' variety of interview. One can either invite four or five people with a common experience of some problem to come together to be interviewed in this way by a question master, or collect a series of single speakers who have had rather interesting and unusual individual experiences. If one organises the interview along B.B.C. lines, a great deal depends on the skill of the interviewer who is the link between the audience and the speakers, and who must encourage the

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

audience to join in the questioning. For this reason, if one's chief desire is to help the audience to become articulate, it is really very much better to begin by allowing the audience to arrange beforehand exactly what questions they wish to ask.

It is true that, if the interviewer is very skilful, after eliciting a number of simple personal details and general facts from the guest expert he can get the audience to take up other points. But this is not always easy to arrange, and as a discussion group method the interview technique is never really fulfilling its true function until the interviewer has ceased to take an active part and is merely the chairman (or holder of the ring) for the group which is firing questions at the speaker. Nevertheless, when this interviewing has been done skilfully, some of these sessions have all the attractiveness of a play with a plot of ideas rather than a plot of action. First-class sessions of this kind suggest indeed that a group of three or four experts working together might make a very powerful contribution to the dissemination of knowledge and ideas, as well as to the technique of the discussion, if they could travel from village to village as a performing troupe. The drawback is, of course, that really able and interesting experts seldom have time to spend night after night doing this sort of thing, especially since, by the very nature of the method, they will probably only be 'used' actively for about fifteen or twenty minutes of the whole time. In a world where pressure is very great on people who know their stuff, this matter of using time to the best advantage becomes, with the best will in the world, a matter of priorities.

Discussion groups started in this way, containing within themselves as they do a certain amount of characterisation and a certain amount of plot, have given rise in some circles, and particularly in the R.A.F., to various dramatic forms, from the rather elementary type of programme in which a script is written beforehand by a small number of the group and then thrown open for the discussion of the whole group, to the Living Newspaper technique. The scope of this sort of thing is extremely wide. It gives excellent opportunity for teamwork both among experts and among the ordinary members of individual discussion groups; and in further education teamwork



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

is often the most useful way both to encourage people and keep their interest. Moreover, such methods give an opportunity for writers, for actors and for those careful, painstaking souls who are willing to consult the various books of reference necessary for getting material together. Quite naturally, any method which borrows some of the most successful radio techniques and translates them for the human material of the actual group has gained a tremendous advantage in human interest even over broadcasting itself, though it will obviously be less expert.

Another method, again borrowed from the radio, is that of the Brains Trust, though even here one needs to be extremely careful, since in gathering together a group of people who shall call themselves a Brains Trust, it is too often forgotten that the operative word is 'brain' and that they should only be 'trusted' if they can speak with authority.

A variation on this method is the 'forum', a word which is generally used nowadays to describe that particular type of discussion which consists of introductory speeches by a panel of speakers, followed by open discussion. The Forum has one advantage over the Brains Trust and the 'In Town Tonight' type of interview in that the speakers on the panel are usually chosen for their knowledge of one particular subject and one special side of that subject. For instance, supposing the discussion were about education, one speaker might devote his time to nursery schools, another to technical colleges, another to primary or secondary schools and another to the medical services, meals service or any of the other ancillary functions which are now recognised as part of the education service. There is a great deal to be said for the Forum as a method of introducing people to factual discussion, and if the group is sufficiently keen various aspects of the subject may be prepared by the group themselves, which achieves both a division of labour and co-operation on a theme.

The Commission is another method of discussion, but one which is very much more advanced. It combines both enquiry and discussion and is based on the procedure of a Royal Commission which collects facts from a variety of witnesses having an intimate knowledge of some aspect of a certain subject. The



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

Commission has something in common with the simple interview technique in that the group can meet together first to decide what questions are going to be asked, and which members are going to ask them, and something in common with the Forum in that separate aspects of the subject are dealt with by each person. Moreover, in a Commission it is possible to warn the witnesses of the questions which they are to be asked beforehand, so that the whole thing is very much more prepared. The drawback of the Commission technique is that, by the time the enquirers have asked their questions and the witnesses have replied to them, there is little time for the rest of the group to have much opportunity to make any contributions themselves, and after all it is those contributions which are the most valuable, not so much because of their content, but from the proof they give that minds have been stimulated to think and tongues have become untied.

The old-fashioned straightforward debate with formal openers and seconders on each side very seldom goes with a swing nowadays. Possibly this points to the fact that people are becoming rather kinder than they used to be. People do not take the same pleasure nowadays in scoring off one another in public. One must admit too that a great deal of the debating method is only useful as practice for the would-be professional speaker. Most people are not particularly interested in the spectacle of watching people score verbal points against their opponents whether they believe in the matter they are supporting or not.

A variation of the debate, however, the 'balloon debate', is very popular and is a very useful method of persuading a group of people to prepare some material beforehand without getting too solemn and anxious about it. The usual method is to choose six passengers who take their places in the balloon (on the platform). The passengers are usually given the names of outstanding personalities who each in his different sphere have contributed something valuable to the world, as statesman, writer, explorer or scientist for example. The passengers having taken their places in the balloon, the chairman takes a little time to describe them, to indicate their destination, and if he is of an imaginative turn of mind he can describe the country

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

through which they pass and let himself go as entertainingly as may be. He suddenly changes his tone, and informs the audience that the balloon is slowly beginning to lose height and will not be able to keep going for more than another thirty or forty minutes. If the majority of the passengers are to be saved, one will have to be thrown overboard immediately. Each of the passengers then has to show cause why *he* should most certainly not be the one to be thrown overboard in view of his importance of the work he may yet do, or on any other plea that may occur to him. None of these speeches should last for more than four or five minutes and when each of the passengers has spoken the chairman calls upon the audience to decide which shall be thrown overboard. If time allows it is always wise to invite the audience to ask further questions before coming to its final decision.

When the audience has voted on the passenger to be discarded, it may proceed to assess the order in which the remaining passengers should be thrown out if the worst came to the worst. A variety of most interesting passenger lists can be drawn up, and adolescent audiences particularly seem to like this method very much. It has a very important educational advantage too, in that people who have to take their place in a balloon under the name and style of, say, Sir Christopher Wren, Beethoven, Pasteur or John Wesley are thereby forced to seek for information about these personages, and the information thus gained is passed on to the rest of the audience.

Other methods of promoting discussion are through mock trials and mock parliaments, but unless these are very well staged, unless the organiser has a first-hand knowledge of parliamentary procedure or the courts, the whole thing either becomes artificial or it falls very flat. Such methods need so much very exact preparation that they often leave no time or opportunity for spontaneous comment, and quite often people are either rather bored by their pomposity or, if as often happens one tries both to teach the procedure and yet to enliven the proceedings by using a rather frivolous subject, they are left with a feeling of doubt as to whether, as Sam Weller said about marriage, it is worth while going through so much to achieve so little.

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

Another method of trying to make the best of both worlds—getting the expert *and* the group to talk—has been tried out with some success in a few groups, and particularly in classes organised by the West of England Joint Committee on Adult Education. In one or two cases the tutor attended only alternate meetings, and the others were occupied by discussion among the students themselves. In another case where the class was studying economics, the first twenty minutes of each evening was occupied by a summary of the previous week's lecture prepared by a nominated member of the class, each member undertaking this duty in turn. This was followed by an open discussion. One can quite see that this method would be very useful for people taking a course of study along any one particular line, though quite obviously the method would have to be very skilfully handled among less experienced groups.

Finally, one must never forget that one of the best methods of learning to discuss and learning to agree is through the ordinary day-to-day committee work done by any organised group, whether in a youth centre, a community centre or a Parents' Association. It has often been noticed in youth groups that the quality of the discussion group in the club is very largely a reflection of the amount of responsibility which the members have for their own affairs. It is futile to argue that young people should meet in discussion groups to consider their responsibility for citizenship and world affairs, if they are not allowed to take at least a fair measure of responsibility for the small unit to which they already belong. Committee work must be learned by all members of a democratic state, since in a democracy the whole work of government is in effect done through committees. Parliament itself is, after all, nothing but a rather overgrown national committee. Membership of a committee gives one practice, no matter how limited, in chairmanship, in public speaking, in note-taking for minutes or for a report, and in formulating a scheme for discussion, since any agenda is nothing more nor less than a scheme for discussion. If a committee is skilfully handled and its agenda is carefully drawn up, it can gather information imperceptibly, and this is often the only way in which some people, especially the

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

more conceited among us, are ever persuaded to obtain information.

Moreover, committee work has the great advantage that there one learns not only to discuss, but to agree. To discuss and to agree is just as much a democratic duty as the Nazi's duty was to obey and sacrifice. It can never be sufficiently emphasised that learning to agree is as important a part of citizenship as learning to discuss. After all, agreement is the principle which makes family life possible, which makes the jury system possible, which makes local government and parliamentary government possible.

The born agitator, and those who are always 'agin' everything on principle, must be brought face to face with the fact that, if they cannot carry the majority with them, it is not always because the agitator has more than his fair share of idealism. It is more often than not because either the case is not strong enough to convince enough people, or because the agitators are not able enough, or have not given sufficient care and attention to the presentation of their views to make people believe what they are saying. The very fact that agreement is necessary before any plan can be adopted often provides that salutary delaying action which is essential if the minority shall also get some little consideration under majority rule.

If one can learn in a small committee how to make people agree, if one can learn to be loyal to an agreed course of action, if one can learn the salutary lesson that 'we must all hang together lest we all hang separately', we have learned a great deal more than discussion of itself can teach us. Loyalty to an agreed course of action is one of those essentials of civilised life which is ignored too often. One of the things which made the Nazi impossible to live with was this very inability to abide loyally by any agreed decision. Thus it was that the words 'This is my last territorial claim' became a mockery and a joke even to those who suffered from being the latest if not the last.

This question of agreement leads one to another point. In all matters of discussion one must be careful to preserve an attitude of friendliness and of goodwill. We must beware of fostering a hypercritical attitude. The very words 'critical' and



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

'criticism' have become debased so that the dictionary itself speaks of them in relation to fault-finding. Bernard Shaw's dictum 'Those who can do, those who can't teach' might more fittingly be altered nowadays to 'Those who can do, those who can't criticise.'

Those who are fondest of criticism defend themselves by asserting that what *they* are indulging in is constructive criticism, but unfortunately they often interpret 'constructive' very liberally indeed. Nine times out of ten what they really mean by their 'constructive' criticism is having a busy time pulling a thing to pieces and making utterly half-baked suggestions as to how *someone else* should put it together again. It is only too seldom that they ever *help*, or try to carry out the reconstruction their criticism entails. Criticism has become the new cruelty, and because the creator, whether it be of a pudding or a painting, is both sensitive and hard-working, he suffers excruciatingly from the brickbats thrown at him by the critics. A highly critical attitude, whether it be in a discussion group or on a committee or in the running of a business, has on the whole such poor results; sometimes it causes inertia—people are so afraid of criticism that they do as little as possible, hoping thereby to reduce the criticism to a bearable minimum. Sometimes it makes people so nervous of making those mistakes which all must make from time to time, that they make still more mistakes. Sometimes the strain of working in a highly critical atmosphere is too much for people and they retreat into some form of ill health in sheer self-defence. And sometimes—indeed more generally—criticism keeps people constantly on the defensive, so that they are eternally contra-suggestive.

It is always worth considering very carefully therefore how much is ever really achieved by criticism. If a man's heart is rankling with distress or ill feeling towards you, you cannot win him to your way of thinking with all the logic in Christendom. One of two things happens. Either he remains more confirmed in his own opinion than ever, in which case you have done nothing; or else he is so shattered by your criticism that he is no longer *able* to do anything. Either way nothing is gained. The first dictionary definition is 'discriminating,' 'a



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

skilled judge'—and even God does not presume to judge a man until he has lived the whole of his mortal life.

Before we lapse into criticism it would be as well if we paused to consider whether we are really skilled enough to judge the matter in hand. A judge only makes his statement after considering, not only what was right, but what, taking all the difficulties and circumstances, was right for that particular person. We are much too apt to deal in absolutes—absolute right and absolute wrong. After all, what may be a very indifferent contribution to the discussion if given by a specialist may be an absolutely first-class contribution coming from Johnny (and even the specialist must be allowed his off-moments).

It is not without importance in this connection to reflect that in Russia, where the principle of *sama kritika* (or self-criticism), in addition to group criticism, had at one time become almost a method of education in both schools and youth services, there was such a high incidence of so-called nervous breakdowns in the 17 to 23 age group that it was causing the authorities grave concern.

The evils of an age are often portrayed best in the novels of that age, and it is significant that a best seller among Russian novels in the years just before the entry of Russia into the war in 1940 was a book called *The Clock Watcher*. The hero was a young boy, a veritable Pooh-Bah of the *Komsomols*, who worked so hard rushing from committees to discussions, and from discussions to more committees, that eventually the whole burden of responsibility and of the criticism to which it laid him open caused a mental collapse. In the last chapter of this very moving book we see the boy rushing about the ward of a mental home, feverishly consulting his wrist-watch as he always did in his former busy life. But there is no watch on his wrist. It has been taken away from him long ago.

Criticism is not, of course, the cause of every breakdown, but many people who seem quite unmoved at the time by even the mildest criticism are very often reacting to it to an extent which is in inverse ratio to that which they reveal.

In all committee work, in all discussion, we would be

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

perhaps wiser to concentrate less on criticism and more on appreciation or that old-fashioned virtue of appraisal. It is just as easy to appreciate a point of view as to criticise it. And if people are to learn to agree they can only achieve that agreement in a spirit of encouragement rather than discouragement. It is only if people learn to appreciate one another's difficulties, the artist's difficulties, even the statesman's difficulties, that they are fit to pass judgement. For some little time this tortured and unhappy world might perhaps be best helped by concentrating on those things which are good and thus encouraging us to do them better, rather than by underlining the inadequacies of which we are all painfully conscious. It is only in this way that learning to use our own language will become a stimulus to action and ideas rather than a drag on them.

As in any other type of informal education, in order to be successful with the majority, discussion must be based on social life rather than on academic interests. It needs to be conducted in fairly small groups and in comfort. Warmth and light are of equal importance, and so is a certain guarantee of freedom from interruption, although it is not always the best discussion group which meets in the quietest room. A most successful discussion group used to take place in a Royal Ordnance factory hostel, in a room which was really nothing more than a passage from one wing of the building to another. This would seem absolutely against all the rules, and that Socrates managed pretty well in the street is no argument in its favour. In this particular hostel one was told that the great advantage of having discussions in a room in which there was so much coming and going was that many people who had merely been passing through were encouraged to stay and thereafter made a habit of attending the group. Moreover those who felt that they had had quite as much as they could stand were able to go away without making too much fuss. Some of the best discussion groups are carried on in the corner of the canteen and, indeed, in the corner of the public house, which is only another form of canteen. Many groups find that tea—or some kind of refreshment served about half-way through the evening—is a great help not only in attracting people to the group,

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

but in loosening their tongues. Very often people, who have had a chance to try out a question or point of view on their immediate neighbours during this interval, are thereby encouraged to put it forward later for the benefit of the whole group. Many youth groups are finding that a supper club provides a good way of starting a discussion group, and there would seem to be a great deal of scope for the lunch-hour club in the factory or workshop—rather on the lines of Rotarian and other lunch meetings, for men as much as women like the social side of their educational adventure to be stressed. People dislike seeming highbrow and they dislike seeming ignorant; hence the discussion group technique is popular not only among those who are only eager to know more if they are allowed to do so under cover of a social event, but also among those who wish to know more without admitting how little they know already.

Army experience has shown beyond any shadow of doubt that interest is aroused in discussion in direct proportion to how much it gets down to earth and is concerned with the means of finding practical solutions to personal problems. Objectivity sounds marvellous, and so does considering a question impartially. But almost invariably when people tell you they are not being personal it means that they have not the courage to admit that they are in fact being extremely personal. The beginner is interested at first in his own personal views and the views of his friends. He needs to realise that his interests are part of the common interest of the community before he will be interested in that community interest.

Any topic dealt with in discussion groups, except very advanced groups, needs therefore to be one of immediate interest and the immediacy of the interest must be pushed to its utmost. For instance, in many an A.T.S. group, people sat almost dumb for the first ten or fifteen minutes of a discussion on housing, but if one started by discussing the sort of kitchen they would like to work in the response was readily forthcoming, and, while Social Security meant little to many groups, 'Am I going to get a job' and 'Shall I be forced to take any job?' interested each person profoundly.

Subject matter for discussion groups therefore, particularly

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

for adult groups, has to be 'personalised' in the first series of meetings at all events. If we are discussing education we must discuss first, not the machinery of education, but the subjects taught. If we are discussing housing we must discuss first not town planning, but the kitchen. If we are discussing law we must discuss first not penal reform, but the magistrate's court round the corner.

In all discussion groups which are well run, however, there is an impulse to discuss values as well as facts, and one cannot afford to neglect the emotional satisfaction which people derive from a consideration of values. Each subject has to be considered therefore in a spirit of humour and sincerity, giving due regard to personal experience, to the experience of the expert and to factual information and the harmonising of one's knowledge on all these levels.

What sorts of subjects can we use? Any subject. There is no unsafe topic, though there may be several unsafe ways of dealing with it. When one reads the lists sent in from discussion groups of all sorts, from the humble one-night-a-week club to the youth centre with a membership of two or three hundred, and the vast range of discussion-group matter used in the Forces, and in N.F.S. units in war-time, one can only admire the variety and the diversity of informal education which is being achieved in this way, and be encouraged by the eagerness with which man will pursue the search for truth where that search is sufficiently adventurous.

The very discussion habit has however its own potential difficulties and dangers. There is, for instance, the tendency to imagine that if one has discussed a subject intelligently one has done something to solve the problem discussed (in just the same way that people imagine one benefits from an Education Act immediately it is placed on the Statute Book).

There is a great deal of difference of opinion about this question of leading the discussion group to take action. Most groups, when challenged, are bound to admit that for the most part action consists in the making of wall newspapers, and paving the way for further study, lectures, week-ends and logbooks, the making of surveys and the meeting of officials.



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

In America it would seem that many of these discussion groups resolve themselves into what are known as 'pressure groups' on certain subjects. One is told, for instance, that the enormous influence exerted by women in social reform in America is due to the 'pressure groups' organised by women's societies and clubs. Such measures as the hygienic wrapping of all foodstuffs, and various regulations regarding patent medicines and baby foods to take but two examples, were due in no small measure to pressure from such groups. It is debatable, however, whether it is either desirable or necessary that every discussion group should become a pressure group.

The really important thing to try to achieve is that every person taking part shall feel of equal importance—the group, the leader, the guest expert if any, and even the subject itself! Discussion should move from opinion to facts and information, and from facts and information to re-formed opinion, and finally to action, but often that action can only be a discussion of what to talk about next time, and the co-operative sharing of the task of preparing for it.

One wonders also whether occasionally we do not lose sight of the fact that there are other things to discuss besides social problems and political reform. One longs to see much more discussion concerning literature and all the other joys of the educated man, which are so seldom shared as widely as they might be, and which after all are just as 'personal' in the sense of giving one the opportunity to live a fuller life as are wages and prisons.

One of the great essentials of discussion is that it should give people access to more information, not only by word of mouth and at the time of discussion, but later on. Too many people still regard the intelligent man in rather the same fashion as his neighbours did Oliver Goldsmith's village schoolmaster, with wonder 'that one small head should carry all he knew'. They still feel that the informed person is the person who carries a great deal of disconnected information on various subjects in his head, whereas the best type of intelligence is not usually that of the man with the acquisitive mind, but that of the man who has learned to burden himself with as few facts as possible, but who knows where to go to get the information



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

that may be needed at any particular time, and having got that information knows how to draw conclusions from it.

Again, helpful as discussion notes, lesson points and pamphlets particularly designed for discussion groups may be, it is important that those using these documents should always bear in mind the source from which they come. With the best will in the world it would be impossible to imagine that a W.E.A. pamphlet on Social Security, however objective, would not differ from a Tory Reform pamphlet on the same subject, however objective that might be. Indeed, while one would not deny the helpfulness of all the bulletins issued under A.B.C.A., the 'British Way and Purpose' pamphlets, the Ministry of Information 'Notes to Speakers', the documents issued by the W.E.A., the Council for Education and Citizenship, etc., nevertheless, it would be extremely dangerous to rely for one's help solely on any of these publications. As was pointed out earlier, and as has been pointed out so much better and more forcibly by Professor Mannheim in his *Diagnosis of our Times*, there is an increasing tendency for the dissemination of ideas in the modern State to be controlled and manipulated at the centre, and therefore the more adult education there is, the more necessary, but the more difficult, it becomes to see that the very material used for discussion is not itself centralised and authoritarian. For this reason it is important if one is using the discussion method to see that it is stimulated by the use of as many widely differing periodicals and pamphlets as possible.

Informal discussion is therefore an excellent method of introducing people to the novel, the newspaper, the library, to books of reference, and, having done that, of giving them practice in picking other people's brains, sifting evidence and coming to an informed judgement. One of the most necessary tools of life is language used with confidence and precision, but one must not claim too much for talking. Talking never really settles anything. It is just a matter of handing out bits of oneself in return for bits of other people. Having gathered these pieces together one can sort them out when one is alone. A great deal of talking is merely a system of correction and of revision of one's ideas, if any; it is the business of the discussion group to

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

share ideas, and therefore one of the main educational values of the discussion group is that it should encourage people to read.

We are always being told that young people do not read, a fact which is no more true of them than it is of older people. The truth is that there are large numbers of people in this country who *cannot* read and still larger numbers who *do* not. The illiteracy rate in England and Wales was given officially in 1924 as 0.3 per cent but Burt's recent estimate is 2.5 per cent and this figure is definitely confirmed by the revelations concerning the number of adult illiterates in the Services in the war years. Indeed, the Service intake gave us one of the first large-scale opportunities to discover the extent of illiteracy among the younger adults, and one of the most disquieting discoveries made was that the 1939 figure was as high as 4 per cent.

In a country which has had compulsory education for nearly three-quarters of a century, this is very disturbing and no amount of consideration of the causes really helps, though we are told that in about 70 per cent of the cases it is due to prolonged absence from school because of illness or to interrupted education as a result of a variety of family upheavals. What is important about this question of illiteracy is that there are really three kinds.

There are those who are constitutionally illiterate, and for whom very little can be done—indeed, it has been discovered in the Army that it is not possible to make a great deal of progress with any type of illiterate over forty. (This, of course, is true of other things. One of the most successful housing managers gives it as her considered opinion that unless one moves a woman from a slum before she is forty it is very difficult after that age for her to learn to keep a new house in anything very much above slum conditions.)

Secondly, there are the mechanically illiterate. Quite a number of these have known how to read and write once, but have forgotten. It is true that they were never perhaps very bright at it, but we often forget that in the modern world it is perfectly possible to get by, and indeed to live a moderately

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

intelligent and useful life within a limited range, without reading a word or putting a pen to paper. One can be kept up-to-date on current events and on literature through the radio and the film, and as long as one possesses the necessary skill to write one's name, however badly, on certain occasions, there is literally no need to do any more. Reading and writing are like other skills. If one does not exercise them and if one never was very proficient, the skills tend to decline. This is particularly true if one is not interested, and one seldom is interested in a skill which one has failed to master.

The Army made amazing progress with the mechanical illiterates. Special short courses were arranged for them. Only men who were totally illiterate were sent on these courses ; yet at the end of only six weeks between ten and twenty out of every thirty men who attended could read and understand a newspaper. Many were reading books for pleasure and about twenty-five out of every thirty were able to write letters unaided—a newly acquired power which meant a great deal to the men themselves and to their relatives. Quite apart from the advantages of attaining such a skill, the ability to read and write reflected itself in their whole outlook, which became very much less slovenly, less suspicious and less unhappy. At home these people had been easily able to hide their inability to read and write, but in the forces, isolated from their families and on unfamiliar ground, they found that their inability to read and understand orders very often led to military offences, and they always felt at a disadvantage.

The great problem, however, is not so much the illiterates as the semi-literates. Millions of people can read and write but their sort of reading and writing is hardly of the standard that the taxpayer expects from a payment of £51,000,000 a year. These semi-literates are by no means confined to one class or economic level. One can visit many of the homes both of Mr. and Mrs. Aspidistra and Mr. and Mrs. Orchidaceous and search in vain for a book apart from a Family Bible, a Penguin which another visitor may have left behind and (in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Orchidaceous) a telephone directory. There are many people who neither belong to public libraries nor take out a private library subscription,

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

who never, indeed, read a book from one year's end to another. Among my own friends of whom this is true I can count a company director, an engine driver, a chartered accountant and the manager of a large store, and doubtless most people could make a similar list. Moreover they are no worse as citizens or as human beings than those who drug themselves with unpurposeful and unguided reading, and who are often among the most selfish, self-centred and antisocial members of the community—those who 'cannot love and cannot suffer and therefore they read'. There is no more virtue in reading to kill time than in any of the other methods of killing this priceless gift.

But why is it that so many people do not read? Possibly there are two main reasons. One is that a number of semi-literates read so slowly that they get bored by it. The other, and by far the larger group, can read fairly rapidly but have suffered so much from lack of guidance in reading in their adolescent and adult life that they too have become bored by the material which has so frequently fallen into their hands. Therefore they also have given it up.

When one considers how important in the question of continued education throughout life reading is, there would seem to be a case for paying far more attention to the sheer mechanics of reading. Many people who know a great deal about how a car works, and what happens when you do certain things with fuse wires, plugs and the rest, have not the faintest notion of how they read; and attention has seldom been paid to developing anything like a reading speed. It is pointless, however, to blame teachers for this, because until they have very much smaller classes to deal with the wonder is that anyone learns to read at all. To see a young teacher fresh from college coping with 40 to 50 five-year-olds and teaching them to read is akin to being present at a miracle, and no-one who has tried to teach even one much loved child how to read can do anything but marvel at the skill displayed in teaching 40 all together. Obviously, if teachers faced with such a large group get 25 per cent to read well and 50 per cent to read haltingly, they have done more than one might expect.



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

It would seem worth while, however, until those happier days of really small classes arrive, to interest the adolescent and the adult in the mechanics of reading so that they may increase the skill they have brought from school rather than lose it.

How do you read? Are you a lip reader, a Wimbledon reader, a skipper or a diagonal reader? Very few people know. The lip reader is fairly easy to spot, though a number of people who do lip-read are quite unconscious of the fact. Quite often it is due to lack of practice. Quite often it is because they have something wrong with their eyes which is a little more unusual than the common long or short sight, and has therefore never been detected; and partly it is due to the fact that they have never been given any useful tips on how to speed up their reading. The lip reader, poor soul, says every word and reads every word. He hasn't learnt the art of how to fuse words, hasn't developed the skill of not bothering to look closely at anything but the key words.

The Wimbledon reader, though quicker than the lip reader, painfully turns his head from side to side as he reads because no-one has ever given any attention to his eye span and nobody has ever helped him to develop quick left to right eye movements, and therefore he reads a book with all the unconscious head movements of someone watching a tennis match.

The quick reader can take in a line at a time and has very rapid left to right eye movements, and one longs for the day when it will be possible to have instruments in our schools for checking, measuring and speeding up people's reading. There are in existence metronome-scopes which show one line of print at a time and therefore develop regular left to right eye movements, rotoscopes which train the muscles of the eye, cycloptophones which help to develop vision, flash cards which can be used to develop recognition of words and phrases, and reading films which are planned to increase the eye span. All these would be invaluable to the slow reader, and they would also bring before every reader the necessity of taking as much pride in increasing his speed in reading as in increasing his speed in running. One realises how slowly



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

most people read when one sees a film which has a great deal of printed material in it. The timing of the material on the screen is designed to suit the average reader, and it is interesting to observe how often about a third of the film audience is infuriated by the fact that it is so slow, and the other third infuriated by the fact that they have only got about half-way through before it is flashed off the screen. And how slow the average is!

Because classes in school are so large the harassed teacher is forced to try to keep the pace about right for the majority. The result is perforce that the quick reader is seldom encouraged to become yet quicker. Inevitably, too, the young and avid reader incurs just as much displeasure by finishing his book long before anybody else, as the slow one does by getting through only half as much as everyone else. One of the main obstacles always raised about this encouragement of speed in reading is that if people read too quickly they do not 'take in anything'. Quite obviously if one reads too fast there is a danger in this, particularly if one is reading for examination purposes or to obtain exact information on a certain point. Even here, however, the objection is not so wholesale as it appears at first sight. Most candidates for examinations do not read widely enough—and there is probably just as much, if not more, to be gained by reading several books on a subject fairly rapidly as there is by reading one very slowly. In any case, if one must read as carefully as all this it is probably essential to take notes, and that slows one up automatically. The great trouble with reading slowly is that one gets bored with it, and for the average adolescent and adult it is too much to ask that they shall continue reading if their pace is so slow that they can never lose themselves in the enjoyment of the theme.

Moreover, everyone treats the quick reader and 'skipper' as though he were something rather immoral. Yet why do we read books? We read either for information or for pleasure, and in reading for pleasure it is surely the author's business to capture and hold one's attention. If he does not, one skips, and why skipping should be one of the major reading crimes has never been conclusively proved. Perhaps the young lady

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

in Rotherham came closest to the truth when she said quite earnestly and sincerely that it was not fair to the author to skip! Yet some of the greatest literary giants and certainly most really well-read people are those who have carried the art of skipping to a very high degree, not only when they read for pleasure, but when they read for information as well. There are surely two kinds of skipping. There is the lazy slipshod method which isn't really skipping at all, but dipping; and there is the skipping which demands actually more, and not less, mental energy than reading of the line-upon-line kind. It was said of Dr. Johnson (whom no-one could accuse of being semi-literate) that he used to buy books and tear what he wanted out of them and throw the rest away. Though no-one would suggest that everybody should be as drastic as he, the fact remains that the more omnivorous the reader, the more selective he is, the more practised at tearing the heart out of a book. The practised reader rapidly learns to know when he is approaching the passages he can afford to skip and when he is approaching those that must be studied carefully and slowly.

Many more people, for instance, would read Walter Scott if only someone would advise them to start at Chapter III. By Chapter III the minstrel has climbed down from his rocky crag, his beard has ceased to wave in the breeze, we have ceased to contemplate the road by which he has come and the road by which he is going, the birds have gone back to their nests and the trees and the mountains have settled into place, and one can get on with the story. But no-one ever tells people that, and if one is really slow at reading and is never helped to quicken one's pace, or told that it is better to read part of a book than not to read at all, one becomes disheartened; and having grasped the fact that it is quite possible both to make money and to spend it without indulging in this curious pursuit of reading, one gives it up. The result is that a large number of people read nothing but the daily paper and various periodicals, and, even as far as the daily paper is concerned, no-one ever talks of 'reading' it. Test yourself. If you want the newspaper someone else has, what do you say?—"May I have a "look" at your paper?"

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

and not 'May I have a "read" of it?' We have ceased to think of reading in connection with newspapers, hence possibly the popularity of the *Daily Mirror*. Indeed the daily papers are now designed for readers of three types, those who can read but can't think, those who can both read and think, and those who can only look.

The diagonal reader has gone a stage further than the skipper. He learns to look diagonally down a page and rapidly pick up what he wants on each. It is no good saying that diagonal readers can't possibly know what is in it after they have done that, because the fact remains that they do. For instance, one of the foremost exponents of the diagonal method of taking in a page more or less as a unit was Sidney Webb, and one could hardly accuse Sidney Webb (or Arnold Bennett, who also did this) of not being well-read.

Another method which always seems to shock people is that of reading a book from back to front. When I was first caught doing this I was told that it was a housemaid's method of reading. It was carefully explained that people who only read cheap novels always read the last chapter first to find out if 'it all comes right in the end'. Apparently it was a shocking thing to want to know if things came right in the end, and it was affirmed that it 'spoil the story for you'. While this may be true about novels, if one is reading a book for information it may be by far the best method of proceeding. After all, when one has read a number of books on a certain subject one already has a fair amount of knowledge. Since, therefore, any given book on a subject usually deals in its preliminary chapters with the establishment of basic principles and only then leads on to the rather more original conclusions, it is quite obvious that it is the second half which reveals whether the book is one that is going to add to one's information on the subject or whether it is just another book. If the second half of the book opens up new lines of approach one can then go back to the beginning and sit down and enjoy it, knowing that one will not have waded through a couple of hundred pages without adding one jot or tittle to either one's enjoyment or knowledge.

Moreover, a very important point is that if people are to

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

develop any sort of literary taste they must read a great deal. It is equally true that if they are not 'one subject' people they will need to read a great many things until they find their overriding interest. If it takes too long to read each book one may die before coming to the subject or type of literature which might have been a joy to one. The curious thing is that time and time again every enquiry has proved that it is the highly intelligent reader who reads extremely widely, since all's grist that comes to his mill, and it is the person whose skill is not great whose reading becomes so narrowed down with the years that he hardly reads at all.

The second great factor in semi-literacy is the general lack of guidance, not only in the sheer technique of reading, but in the choice and selection of material to read. Various enquiries have proved conclusively that the adolescent reads a great deal.<sup>1</sup> It is round about eighteen to twenty-five that people cease to read quite so much, and it is the person who was an omnivorous but misguided reader at sixteen who seems to get fed up first. Why is this? It is generally due to the fact that for a variety of reasons a large number of people do not take advantage of the facilities of a public library, either for borrowing books or for guidance on reading. They rely on the bookshop round the corner for their reading material. It is surprising to find how many adolescents spend a fair amount of their pocket money each week on the two-penny and sixpenny type of book, ranging from the comic or the weekly which may be filled with fiction or adventure, to semi-technical journals on every subject from the keeping of furred and feathered pets to pseudo-psychology. Girls' interest in reading,<sup>2</sup> especially with regard to the 'love books', is even more interesting than boys', since the latter rely on the semi-technical journal and cheap detective fiction, with only occasional excursions into the more lurid type of romance which is almost pornographic—and this is rare and usually handed on in a progressively tattered condition until it falls to bits. Girls often buy an exceedingly wide variety of two-penny and fourpenny women's weeklies, and all sorts of 'true

<sup>1</sup>See Bristol Survey.

<sup>2</sup>*Interests of Girls—An essay in Principles of Grouping.*



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

life' stories, and although these undoubtedly fulfil their intended (and by no means to be despised) function of bringing glamorous phantasies into many drab lives, yet their readers are often full of very hostile comments. 'Men don't act that way', one is told, or 'There are enough soldiers about already', or 'It's all very well, but it couldn't happen really'; and if one firmly tackles a series of this most popular literature for only one week one soon realises how right they are.

For instance, the serial stories in one week in two different magazines were on these lines: The first was about Our Lindy, who apparently was always in a spot of bother—'She'd never do it. How could she go through the streets in her night-dress? But no-one seemed to be taking any notice and she realised that with her coat over it it must look like an evening frock.' In the next magazine Emmy 'was fighting desperately to save Alan's life while Sylvia fights just as desperately to finish it. Barely twenty-four hours before Emmy had been a prisoner under this very roof. Now she was returning disguised as a nurse.' Captions from these papers give one the tone of the whole thing: 'Pretend you know me. Pretend you're making love to me.' 'Was she shy or was she fly?' 'The wife he kept dark.' 'Already in her shallow way she was falling for him because he travelled first and had a gold cigarette lighter and belonged to a different world from hers.' 'This was Barbara's chance. She knew his kiss was an impulse that meant nothing but she was going to make the most of it.' 'Sweethearts for life—shows in what strange places romance can bloom.' 'I know you're not sixteen yet. Will you lie about your age for my mother's happiness?' 'Did I do right or wrong when I whispered my consent at last?' 'You are going to have a baby, Peggy.—Everyone would have to know—my father and mother, the girls at school.' 'The secret killer, from whom no girl in uniform is safe.' And so on and so on.

Yet there is also a great deal of healthy common sense in these papers, chiefly to be found in the correspondence columns, though the mode of expression is often rather trite. 'To err is human, to forgive divine' occurs very often. 'You are really too young to be attractive to the opposite sex.'



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

'Your mother is quite right in being firm with you.' 'How can I know I love him?—If you don't know, you don't love him.' 'What time should a girl come home at night?—It depends on how old you are and whom you are out with.' Or there is Comfort Corner which gives you your luck from the stars or tells you how to get rid of your warts or gives you a knitting pattern or suggests how to make allowances for a superior sister, or there may be an engaging little snippet like 'A prayer for to-day: "O Lord, help Alice to put up with me".'

Naturally, if you read this sort of thing and pay good money for it over a period of years, you get rather tired of reading; and if nobody ever introduces you to anything a little more exciting than 'Prudence was an unsophisticated country girl, but her wits were a match for Valentine's charm' or 'She caught him on the rebound' or 'He had no intention of returning from this leave without at least one feminine scalp' or a 'complete long novel' which begins with 'Two men wanted her' and promises to continue next week with 'No bounds to her wickedness'—you begin to feel that all this reading business isn't what it's cracked up to be. For, as you grow up, you find that the young men of your acquaintance do not live up to this sort of thing, and even if you are approached by anyone glamorous your boy friend 'just says 'op it and they 'op. It may be life but ain't it slow!' So large numbers give up reading—since it would seem a waste of money—and concentrate on knitting and dancing.

It may be that quite a number of the people responsible for this sort of magazine which has been turning out this same type of material for about fifty years—changing only the fashion and the slang—have not realised the cumulative effect of improved education. It is true that their circulation cannot be suffering greatly, or they would not carry on, but it is a circulation aimed at one age group, and it does not carry the reader forward to another type of magazine. It is surely a case of small—or one suspects great—profits and quick returns, but it seems a suicidal policy that turns out magazines for 14-17's which will kill them as potential readers as they grow older.

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

The only cure, of course, for reading rather indifferent books is to read better books. But when one has said this, alas, one is besieged by all sorts of people who beg for lists of books 'suitable for adolescent reading'. Any book is suitable for adolescent reading that is suitable for adult reading, and that's all there is to it, and the only way to encourage people is to have plenty of books lying about. Books are the furniture of the mind, and any club, any meeting place for people, should have furniture for the mind within it as well as furniture for the body. A great deal of the art of reading is really the art of getting people accustomed to handling books. That is why one regrets the fact that most books are published in hard covers. They are so much easier to handle in soft covers. It is so much easier to read among one's work-mates if one's book is in a soft cover which will not give them the impression that one is indulging in anything highbrow.

Many people have been introduced to worth-while reading through the Penguin and Pelican series—and it is not only the cheapness that attracts the buyer, but the unassuming soft cover—the ease with which one can slip it into the mackintosh pocket if Funny Fred the lowbrow heaves in sight.

This question of handling books is equally applicable to works of reference. People literally do not know what the main books of reference are—or how to handle them. One youth group enjoyed itself thoroughly for a whole evening digging out the answers to a quiz which had been based on information which could be gained from such books of reference as a Kelly, a *Who's Who*, a Whittaker, a telephone directory and a Bradshaw. The group was divided into two teams, each having a complete set of the necessary reference books, and the excitement entailed over the race for time, and the co-operation necessary for consultation, were proof of the fun which can be found even in teaching people to find information for themselves.

It must not be overlooked that the newspaper itself is a piece of information that needs skill for its proper handling. One of the most useful and interesting pieces of study carried on by a group of men, who came together first of all as a

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

gardening club, centred in this very topic of reading a newspaper. An editor came and talked of how he managed to 'read' a dozen or so newspapers a day—and told them how to look at their own newspapers and how to compare them with others. A reporter came and told the story of his working day. The group managed to get hold of some films, among them *Spreading the News*, a two-reel film which has for its setting the offices of the *Daily Herald* and gives a very good account of both the editorial and mechanical sides of the production of a paper. Someone else arranged for the group to borrow Philip Gibbs's novel *The Street of Adventure* which, though a little out of date, gives an excellent picture of life from the Fleet Street angle. They then went on to make a most interesting chart of the reading interests of the whole Club to which they belonged—a nice piece of social survey in miniature—and had a lecture on the use of the newspaper in educating children and several on the press in other countries.

During the course of these meetings many and wide were the questions covered—from the law of libel to the advisability of printing details of murder cases. They discovered and delighted in various pieces of verse about the Press—from:

*'You cannot hope to bribe or twist  
Thank God, the British journalist  
But seeing what the chap will do  
Without it, there's no reason to.'*

To the other hot favourite:

*'If you would find the well of truth  
And drink it crystal clear  
Oh you must dam the Beaverbrook  
And drain the Rothermere.'*

And the result of all this was a series of talks about famous journalists, and then famous writers!

Yet another useful approach is through letter writing. English literature has a wealth of material in jolly, sad and beautiful letters, and reading the letters of others occasionally stimulates people to write better ones for themselves. Not

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

the least of the sufferings of the inarticulate is that of being separated from loved ones, and being unable to tell them anything that really matters; not one of the least causes of inferiority is the inability to put pen to paper when one wishes to do so. But it is only by wallowing in the words of others that one finds words for oneself.

Much use can be made of attractive periodicals and anthologies. Instead of complaining about the strip cartoon and the 'rather depressing flood of literature coming from abroad', the thing to do is to outflood it by rather less depressing literature of our own. There are few adolescent girls and boys who will not find something to attract them in such weeklies as *John o' London's* and *Picture Post* and such monthlies as *Lilliput* and the various Digests and selected short stories. But even here, over and above having books about, one needs to direct a campaign to encourage everyone to belong to the library.

The advertisement of public libraries is not even in its infancy and, although the public libraries might do a great deal on their own behalf, it is for all those who are concerned with education to do their share in such advertisement. Wherever there is any further education there should we find attractive lists of books, from 'the book of the radio' to 'the book of the film' and from 'the book of the year' to 'the book of the month'. But lists in themselves are a little unattractive and much can be done to direct people's reading not only by giving them a list of books, but by making a series of wall newspapers which contain really snappy selections from books which one is sure at least some of the group will like. And by snappy selections one means *snappy* selections, not slabs of moral uplift that remind one of quotations from the calendar that one's great-aunt always gives one at Christmas time. The modern generation has learned to appreciate and enjoy the subtlety of what the American calls the wisecrack and any piece of good reading has its wisecracks somewhere or other. The appeal of fiction, whether one reads a sixpenny 'love book' or a seven-and-sixpenny romantic novel, is always lessened by the fact that there really aren't enough plots to go round; and the first great step in literary

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

appreciation has been made when one discovers that what is important is not the story but how the story is told. Even Shakespeare begged, borrowed and stole most of his plots, and Bernard Shaw, no mean follower in the dramatic field, has asserted: 'It is not what I make them do, it is what I make them say!' Hence if one can attract people to more worth-while books by snappy extracts quite often half one's work is done.

'“Ave a nice cup of tea, sir.” “Can you guarantee that it will be a nice cup of tea?”’—What young woman wouldn't find her interest at least mildly roused by a quotation of that kind, coming not from 'Jessica's Jeopardy' but from one of the finest war plays which has ever been written? ‘“Oh Daddy, how jolly.” “It isn't. It's a monkey eating fruit,”’ coming not from 'Sally of the South Seas', but from one of a series of novels which give an excellent sociological study of a certain section of British life.

'“Suppose, m'lud, I were to see you going into a public house——” “Coming in, I think you mean,”’ coming not from a newspaper report, but from the exciting autobiography of one of the most brilliant barristers who ever took silk.

'And so they went to the Sunday School treat together, and the vicar asked him to say grace. For the first time the great actor didn't know his lines and at last murmured, “Oh Lord, open thou our lips”,’ coming not from Uncle Francis' funny page, but from the biography of a great actor.

This is the sort of snippet that attracts the reader and this is the sort of thing that many public libraries would be happy to help in compiling. Moreover, to the shy and retiring it is a great advantage to be able to go to the library and ask for what one wants. For those unaccustomed to handling books the *embarras de richesse* is so overwhelming that, after searching in vain for something that seems their cup of tea, they vanish with the nearest book that comes to hand and a feeling that they have outstayed their welcome—a feeling which is by no means the fault of the librarian, but is engendered very often by the oppressive nature of the building and the feeling of inferiority which it produces. None of us are really ourselves in a public library any more than in a bank.



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

In this whole matter of reading it is very important that one shall not be too high-minded at first, and that one shall use every method one can to introduce people to books. Of the preparing of lists there is no end, but there is something to be said for compiling a series of interest lists. We must get rid of the idea that there is such a thing as *the* classic which we are indeed illiterate not to have read. There are an astonishing number of books in the world that one is indeed none the worse for not having read, and in reading it is not an atom of good to force the unpractised too much. They are apt to feel (though probably too polite to say): 'If he is no good to me, what care I how good he be?' Just as young people are rather wary of painters who are called 'old masters' and therefore strike them as old-fashioned, so a great many people are frightened by something called 'the classic'.

Hence it is by no means a bad idea to begin one's guidance in the field of modern literature first, and work back later to the classics of other days. A book is not any the worse for being modern, and we have in our midst at the moment between twenty and thirty good workmanlike novelists, who not only write a story well and competently but who go to an enormous amount of trouble to get their background facts, whether it be the life of another country or the customs of a certain group of workers, absolutely dead right. Just as it is possible to study a great many subjects through the film, a large number of subjects can be studied through the novel. It is possible to prepare a whole series of twelve lectures on psychology by taking twelve modern novels as a basis. (And it is infinitely preferable that people should widen their knowledge of human nature and their understanding of personal relationship, through the novel rather than through any pseudo-psychological case-reading.) One can get a very adequate background of Russia through such novels as *Dasha*, *Frossia*, *And Quiet Flows the Don*. It is possible to get an insight into all sorts of jobs through the novel. For instance, Monica Dickens in *One Pair of Hands* and *One Pair of Feet* has given an extremely valuable if light-hearted picture of both domestic service and nursing. *Cluny Brown* is both an interesting psychological study and a good piece of literature, also dealing with domestic service.

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

Those of us who do not work in factories might get a worse picture of factory life than that revealed in Priestley's *Daylight on Saturday*, Monica's Dickens's *The Fancy*, or in *A Job in the North* or D. M. Hill's *Ladies May Now Leave the Machines*. Those interested in drama will be none the worse if they begin by reading Priestley's *The Good Companions* or the *Letters of G. B. Shaw to Ellen Terry*. Anyone who works on a committee is all the better for reading Winifred Holtby's *South Riding* and the detective novel and the thriller reveal a very high standard of workmanship and accuracy. More than one group of young people has been intensely interested in discussions on the blood and thriller through the ages and in the discovery that *Treasure Island* is a blood and *Jane Eyre* a thriller, which encouraged them to read both books and to discuss thoroughly the whole question of whether the modern preoccupation with the blood and the thriller is not a rather disturbing thing.

A great disadvantage of indulging in horror by proxy is that one soon becomes dulled to actual horrors, and one sometimes wonders whether the reports of atrocities which came out of Europe before Munich did not fall on ears which were deafened from having indulged in so much phantasy-horror that they could not dissociate their bedtime reading from the actual horror being perpetrated in many parts of Europe long before the war. While one recognises the escape and relief which even the blood and the thriller can provide, one cannot close one's eyes to the fact that some of the bloods published at the moment are verging on blood lust.

The detective story is in quite another class, partly because it has attracted a very clever and conscientious type of writer, from one of the earliest detective stories—Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone*—to other masterpieces like Dorothy Sayers's *Nine Tailors*, a book which is a splendid illustration of the amount of research which the modern novelist is prepared to put into one novel. The detective is on the side of law and order, and it is no bad thing to encourage people to be on the side of law and order. It is interesting also to observe that detective fiction is only popular in democratic countries, and was banned in both Italy and Germany before the war. The detective story does not frighten one out of one's wits, but encourages one to

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

use what wits one has, and while it ministers to a natural curiosity about crime, it is not only a story but a challenge—a challenge which the modern reader has been quick to take up, so that he now demands fair play from the author. Which reminds one of a highly entertaining discussion in a club about Agatha Christie's *Murder of Roger Ackroyd*. Is Agatha Christie, who, to do her justice, usually plays fair, doing so in this book, since it is impossible to pick out the criminal because she uses the device of making him tell the tale?

Another way of encouraging people to read, which is especially useful with those whom one suspects of being such slow readers that they bore themselves, is the old-fashioned method of reading aloud. Miss Browning, the County Librarian of Warwickshire, remarked during her evidence in *New Ventures in Broadcasting*: 'It is a curious fact that when addressing village audiences the reading of poetry is greatly appreciated, though volumes of poetry in the local libraries are not popular except among children attending some of the better schools. This suggests that many borrowers do not read sufficiently fluently to appreciate rhythm for themselves.'

Since so many people do not read sufficiently fluently to get their teeth into a story, we probably do not know quite how much we owe to the B.B.C. for the reading of poetry and telling of stories. In any reading aloud it is almost inevitable that one shall, to a certain extent, come between the author and his work. And it is not easy to please everyone, as evidenced by the American gentleman who remarked after attending one of Charles Dickens's *personal* readings: 'The reader had no more notion of Sam Weller than a cow has of wearing a stuffed shirt.' To those who have not read for themselves, however, even a poor interpretation is better than no interpretation at all, provided that it is not so halting or so shy-making that it puts them off altogether.

Most people feel safer with prose, but in practice verse-reading is often by far the better way to begin. A lecture-demonstration called 'Nonsense and Humour and where it can take you', for instance, has interested groups of young people and their leaders drawn from widely differing communities. On one occasion, it was faced with children who were said to

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

be thirteen and a half, but who certainly looked not much more than a well-developed nine, the whole of two Sixth Forms from the local Boys' and Girls' Grammar Schools, some A.T.S. officers, some schoolgirls and nuns from a convent school in the neighbourhood, and other boys and girls who had come straight from factories and foundries, and in spite of the mixed group they all got something out of it. One knows this, because they came back for more, and because of what they said to other people, although it is easy to tell whether the adolescent part of the audience is being satisfied since they have various fairly obvious ways of becoming uninterested!

Such a session begins with nonsense verse. It may be limericks or ruthless rhymes. Fortunately English literature is very rich in material of this kind. Moving on from this to limericks or to epitaphs, one can encourage the audience to make up a limerick as a community effort, or at least to supply their own last line to a limerick. There is much to be said for community verse-making as well as community singing. From this one moves to parody and from the parody to the original. This may seem the wrong way round—but it works.

People like to know how things are made, and the construction of the limerick, and even the triolet and cleriheuw if you are allowed to have a shot at them, is fascinating to both young and old.

Hence through reading aloud one can encourage people to try to write for themselves. Verse always seems to be the most suitable thing to begin with—probably because most adolescents have a feeling for poetry; it is the age, as R.L.S. wrote, for 'flashing from one end of the world to the other both in mind and body; to try the manners of different nations; to hear the chimes at midnight; to see sunrise in town and country; to be converted at a revival; to circumnavigate metaphysics; write halting verses; and run a mile to see a fire.'

But it is not only the adolescent group which can be thrilled by community verse-making. Many a mothers' club has made its own verses, and many a fathers' group has staged its own pantomime and issued its own journal. It is true that a great deal of this writing has little or no merit as literature, but a great deal that is printed is equally devoid of such merit.

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

Verse-making proved a great joy and consolation to one member of a community centre, now dead, who in addition to having an extremely delicate daughter was rapidly going blind herself. Having been stimulated by reading and poetry afternoons she obtained great pleasure from writing her verses 'in her head', and her daughter found equal pleasure in copying them out and giving them to the warden. It would be very easy to be clever about many of her verses, but what happened to her and the group as a result cannot be measured in terms of correct prosody. Both her verse and her joy in it brought happiness to some in that group, and proved an inspiration to others—not always to go and do likewise, it was not their skill. But as she—the official bard of the centre—made her poems, others were inspired to do their share in placing their different skills at the disposal of the whole group. Moreover, many a one who is no good with either hands or tongue has discovered himself in the field of writing. One often has the extreme pleasure of seeing new light in the face of someone who has discovered something that they can do. 'I can do this' is both a satisfaction to us all and, alas, a surprise to very many. A great deal of further education must be concerned with seeing that people are not compelled to do things for which they have little skill, but they are helped to find a skill and then to bring it to the highest standard of perfection possible for them.

Just as one needs some material before one can discuss anything, so one needs material before one can write. The would-be writer must read or be read to—and there are endless ways of grouping one's material for such reading.

There is a wealth of English literature about animals; there are songs of the sea or poems of love and of friendship, or poems about children, from the *Cautionary Tales* to the infinite tenderness of Patrick Chalmers, who is perhaps the only person in literature who has managed to handle the theme of invalid children without sentimentality. Beginning with the nonsense, or near-nonsense of the rather crude epitaphs to be found in country churches, one can lead people to some of the finest epitaphs written in any language, from 'To Alfred, the Founder of the Kingdom and Nation, Winchester and the



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

English name', to 'Heraclitus', which is one of the few Greek poems which has lost nothing in its English translation. One can pass from Matilda 'who told such awful lies' to a consideration of the few rather pathetic children in Shakespeare. One can begin with the delightful nonsense about the horse and take people to the outer courts of religious experience through the donkey, and in between whiles one can make them drunk with words with such a poem as 'Tarantella' or 'Don John of Austria'.

By grouping one's subjects in this way, one can encourage people to find out how this verse, this poetry, these novels are made, and one can encourage them to find out something about the lives of the people who have written them. One can discuss best sellers through the ages, from the Bible to Robinson Crusoe and from Robinson Crusoe to *The Good Companions*. Above all, one can encourage them to write for their own pleasure. It is only by trying a thing that one finds out how difficult it is, and to try and fail in a new art is not necessarily a depressing experience, and is often responsible for giving one a new reverence for both the work and the workers.

One knows very well that in encouraging people to read, and to write for themselves, it is extremely unlikely that one will reveal to generations yet unborn hosts of new authors who might otherwise have been mute and inglorious Miltons. But one is not only creative when one makes something useful that nobody has ever thought of wanting before, and it is just as useful for any adult to achieve the art of writing a diary to please himself, or of keeping his own scrapbook, as it is to be able to make a plastic bracelet.

There is no need to worry about the born writer, because you can no more keep him from his inkpot than you can keep sand from absorbing water. In a country so rich in every type of literature, however, it is nothing short of a crime not to explore every method of making people conscious of their heritage. Many groups have already experimented with book week-ends and week-ends on literature. War workers' clubs in Warwickshire used their war-time location to become familiar with Stratford and the man who lived there; and made special journeys, often under great difficulties, to attend as

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

many plays as possible. This was not because they thought of it themselves—but because the Club Wardens were educators in the true sense of that word, who made the expeditions seem natural, something it would be a wicked waste to miss, something that was a thrilling adventure. Another group of engineers, clerks and draughtsmen who showed an appreciation and a desire to learn which more than compensated for lack of background knowledge were offered the hospitality of Rugby School, and during the fortnight they went to Stratford to see *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Twelfth Night* and *Romeo and Juliet*. *Othello* was read aloud and discussed, a lecture was given on Shakespeare's life, and there was a visit to Anne Hathaway's cottage.

Such experiences prove yet again the validity of Ruskin's dictum: 'The object of true education is to make people not merely do the right thing, but enjoy the right thing and experience shows that when given the beautiful, the true and the good the response never fails.'

However much one may talk about the advantages of encouraging people to read, and of guiding them in their reading, the fact remains that the final guidance should always be found in the library. We are much too fond, as a race, of venting our dissatisfaction with any public service by setting up a rival voluntary concern instead of directing our energies towards the improvement of the offending public service. If we don't like our schools or our hospitals or our public assistance, instead of improving them we search round for some way of supplementing them. Indeed, almost the only public service we do not endeavour to alter, though we complain about it in and out of season, is the Post Office, and even there perhaps we are only deterred by some dim awareness of the heavy fines which could be imposed on those who sell stamps privately! It is undoubtedly true that people need reading rooms in many and various places, from clubs to public houses, but that does not alter the fact that the library should be their final goal.

Here again, numbers of the public need education not only in the use of a library, but in the very facilities provided by the

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

library service. Numbers of teachers up and down the country, with the co-operation of the librarians, have done much to bring the library to the knowledge of school children, but there are still too many people who imagine that the facilities which the library provides end with their schooldays. There are still vast numbers of young and old who imagine that the library service after schooldays is not free, or else 'not for the likes of us'. They do not understand the system of fines, the question of the renewal of books, and they certainly know nothing about the help they could receive from the librarian in selecting their books. Up to the present the method of helping people to read has been largely the method of borrowing books from the library, or else placing books in the buildings where people congregate. Librarians have been pestered by clubs and societies of all kinds, for loan boxes of books, and many a librarian foresees that if this system continues the library itself will be denuded of all books except those which few people in their senses would ever want to read. Moreover, pressure is being placed upon librarians to develop their work in separate compartments. They are being urged to develop a children's library, and very beautiful and imaginatively conducted children's libraries have been arranged in many areas. The success of these has encouraged many well-meaning people to demand that libraries shall provide equally good facilities for youth libraries. However, though one does not doubt their ability to do this, and to do it no less imaginatively, one might well pause to consider where such departmentalism may lead us. Who is to say whether in a few years' time people may not demand old age pensioners' libraries, or housewives' libraries, or libraries for people over forty?

There is obviously a case for children's libraries, but what the adolescent needs is to be encouraged to do adult things. If, between the ages of 14 and 18, one has developed a taste for reading at all, that taste is very catholic, and the average young person has no need of special shelves and special facilities. All he needs is special help and encouragement, and much of this would be provided by nearly all our librarians if only the public would insist that the Library Committee should not be one of the least considered of our committees,

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

lumped together, as it so often is, with the Parks and Cemeteries Committee.

After all, one of the main methods of continuing one's education is through reading, and when all the evening institutes, community centres, clubs and the rest have been taken into consideration, reading is still the great adult educator. Indeed, the City Librarian of Leeds has done well to remind us that 'the public library performs a positive and more extensive adult educational function than any other form of adult education, while at the same time it subserves all formal education. It is, moreover, economical, its annual cost in Leeds being 2s. 11d. per head of the population. At a conservative estimate at least 10,000 of the 66,000 adult borrowers in Leeds are exercising their minds voluntarily in the pursuit of learning. And yet, despite the obvious success of the public library in this country (America and Russia are the only major countries with comparable institutions), there has so far been little recognition in official quarters that here is an institution which is part of the fabric of the life of the adult in this country, suiting his tastes and idiosyncrasies, an institution, indeed, which demands further investigation and merits greater support and recognition than it has hitherto received.'<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, the library provision as between town and town, village and village, is more uneven than one would have believed possible. Like so many of our educational provisions, the Acts by which Local Authorities are enabled to establish public libraries are merely permissive. Consequently, they are not put into force at all by some authorities. Under other authorities library facilities are limited, since the Acts impose no legal obligation and no standards. The result is that in certain towns the library service is admirable, while in others it is very bad indeed and in others non-existent. There is even one metropolitan borough which has no public library. Mr. Stephen McColvin's admirable report on the Library Service in England and Wales reveals some astounding facts concerning the libraries up and down the country. In one town of between 20,000 and 30,000 people the reference library consists of two small cases of quite useless books. In

<sup>1</sup>*The Times Educational Supplement*, 2 September 1944.



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

another, with a population of between 40,000 and 50,000, a large part of the library rate is transferred to various miners' institutions, who spend it without any control from the librarian or the library committee, a proceeding which is legalised in a fashion which would have been beloved of Gilbert and Sullivan—a clause in the Tramways Act! One does not suggest that the money is not well and adequately spent, but most people would agree that it seems an extraordinary procedure.

On the whole the County library system is of a very much higher standard. Here, however, the great drawback is that the library has to be housed so often in schools, since there are no other suitable buildings, and since indeed the teachers themselves give voluntary service in this matter as in those numberless others from National Savings to the doling out of milk and orange juice. As, however, in many places the villagers still look askance at any educational activities, and as many an adolescent feels that having left school he should leave everything associated with it, the County Library is not much used by numbers of those very people who would gain immeasurably from that contact with the outside world which they could make through reading. Many county librarians are doing a great deal to overcome this by co-operating with Women's Institutes and Youth Service organisations, and by giving talks and lectures, but all this means time, which means extra staff, if it is to be done properly.

The amazing extent to which the amenities and possibilities of the libraries as an educational force in our lives can be overlooked, was revealed in press correspondence about the highly successful 'news rooms' which were set up for the use of the various services, notably the R.A.F., during the war years. In their enthusiasm and anxiety to provide news rooms for the civilian comparable with those for the services nearly everyone entirely ignored the fact that the library of every town is already a news room. Obviously towns and villages which have no library need a news room, or better still a library, but surely what is most required is an extension of the library service and a new attitude towards it.



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

In many places the library with its comfortable chairs, pleasant atmosphere, its courteous and knowledgeable assistants, its lecture rooms and winter programme of lectures, its reading groups and other social activities, is a focal point of cultural activities in the town. In others it is a sombre mausoleum, smelling like Monday in a communal wash-house, so dark and so oppressive that it is remarkable that anyone ever manages to get hold of the book required. There is still a surprising number of libraries which do not allow open access to their stock, and where the search for the book you require is something which combines all the frustrations of an obstacle race and a pin-table saloon. In the latter one is at least definitely informed that one is indulging in a 'game of skill and not of chance'. It is high time that the would-be reformer turned his attention to an outcry for more funds and more staffs for libraries, high time that public recognition was given to the very important part which libraries play in the educational service, high time indeed that all libraries were given the opportunity and the funds to develop along what might almost be termed Community Centre lines.

For many years to come the question of housing adult education is going to be a major problem, and will be one of the most powerful stumbling blocks in the way of the provision of such education. What with the enormously increased demand for vocational training, the existing schools and technical colleges will be more than overcrowded, and adult education, formal and informal, will have to make use of every available facility and form of accommodation. The library, even the sombre mausoleum, might with a little imaginative treatment offer hospitality to some of the adult education which will be required. Libraries are staffed, or rather understaffed, by people who are trained to select and use all kinds of printed material, and they are open throughout the day and often for most evenings of the week. Moreover they commonly have rooms which are not in use during all the hours of opening. Surely, therefore, one of the most natural centres for a great deal of further education might be the library.

As long ago as 1927 in the Public Libraries Committee Report (the Kenyon Report) it was recommended (para. 216):

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

'That the Public Libraries Acts should be amended so as to provide that a public library authority (1) may use the library rooms for any purpose calculated to promote the use of the library; (2) may, for that purpose, provide lectures, etc. . . . (3) may allow the library premises to be used either at a rent or free of charge for any purpose which the Authority thinks proper.'

This has not been officially adopted, however, and there are no provisions in the Public Libraries Acts permitting library authorities to provide lectures. Hence, even in this matter there is need for legislation to tidy up the rather curious situation in which public libraries are placed if they attempt any further education. Up to the present a number of authorities have secured permission by means of a local Act to provide and maintain lecture rooms and cause lectures to be delivered. The public libraries of the Metropolitan Boroughs may also arrange for the giving of lectures on educational and other subjects by authority of section 51 of the London County Council (General Powers) Act, 1936.

Where permission has not been secured, various ways have been found for overcoming the difficulty. The usual way is to obtain the services of voluntary lecturers and so keep the running expenses down to a minimum. These out-of-pocket expenses are frequently met from the petty cash and are generally permitted, or at least rarely challenged, by the auditors. Other methods include the taking of a collection to defray expenses, and the securing of a grant from the Education Committee for the specific purpose of organising lectures. Another way is to establish a separate body specially for the purpose, the Librarian usually acting as Hon. Secretary. The separate organisation is allowed the free use of a room or rooms at the library, and a separate account is kept, quite distinct from the library's accounts. The mention of these methods, however, only emphasises what was stated in the Kenyon Report (1927), i.e., 'the present position is neither logical nor convenient' and 'unless funds are forthcoming from some other source or unless the law is evaded by a subterfuge lectures can only be given if lecturers can be found who will give their services gratuitously'.

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

Much experimental work has already been done; for instance, in one East London area, populated for the most part by artisan families, one of the branch libraries serving a population of about 40,000 was equipped as long ago as 1934 as a local centre for cultural and educational activities. By the outbreak of war it had become the regular meeting place of a number of organisations, ranging from cultural to political, from commercial to sporting. The hall was hired by the County Council for evening classes and by the Electricity Department for day-time lectures and demonstrations. The only regulations concerning the use of these facilities were designed to prevent its use for money-raising purposes.

In the borough of St. Pancras, to mention only one, there are most attractive and well-attended reading circles, and play-reading groups, and in this borough the experiment of taking the library to the people in travelling vans was a war-time measure of inestimable value to countless numbers of borrowers. What this could mean to the busy housewife and to those people who work peculiar hours even in peace-time, is something that would merit very careful consideration.

The difficulty about using the library premises, however, 'for any purpose which the Authority thinks proper' is that if a room in the library is let on hire to any organisation or group of people the library building is liable to be assessed for income tax. If such a room has a separate entrance and no doors connecting with the rest of the library, it alone will be assessed, but otherwise the whole of the building is affected. This sometimes discourages library authorities from fully developing extension activities of this kind.

Hence a great deal of what has been achieved up to date has been done in spite of numberless technical difficulties, and it is small wonder if some library committees have taken the line of least resistance, especially since in many cases their educational work in this field has been greeted with no markedly enthusiastic co-operation from other educational agencies. One can only hope that the time will rapidly come when no personal considerations of prestige, nor personal difficulties and dislikes as between one official and another, one public committee and another, will be allowed to interfere

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

with educational ventures in all those places where people already congregate.

One can well envisage a seven point programme which could be carried out through the library if it were adequately housed and given the necessary financial support. Quite obviously the policy of a library committee in this field must be conditioned by the facilities available in the area. In some it would be unnecessary for them to provide facilities for exhibitions; in places, for instance, where there is already an art gallery. In others it might be unnecessary to provide concerts, where there are already good concert halls. Nevertheless in most places the library, because it is already in touch with such vast numbers of people, could do much to widen their interest in other cultural fields beyond that of reading.

In the first place, for instance, there seems no reason why every library should not be responsible for a steady supply of single public lectures, given by well-known and stimulating lecturers; such lecturers might be concerned in the main with books, they might even be delivered by authors themselves, but even with these limitations the subjects dealt with might range over a very wide field, and might include not only those which satisfy the cultural needs of the community, but their practical social needs also.

In many areas the library would perhaps be the best meeting ground for Parents' Associations, and certainly in many instances the best place for holding lectures on the many and various problems of parenthood.

Again, the library would often be doing a great practical piece of social service by organising lectures for all the many and various types of hobby-merchants, from gardeners to wireless enthusiasts, from carpenters to stamp collectors. There are many of these one-interest people, who seldom get any chance of meeting others of similar tastes, because there just does not happen to be a member of the national association of this or that in the neighbourhood to form a branch. In many cases the impetus to do so might come from a series of talks organised by the library. The selection of books would give some guidance as to the most promising field from

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

which the first audiences might be drawn. We may laugh at the hobby-merchant as much as we please, but as we laugh we must remember in all humility that it was the men who agreed with Rat that 'there is nothing half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats' who in those grim Dunkirk days performed a glorious piece of infinitely brave and valuable rescue work, plying to and fro across the Channel. It was that extremely trying saver of string and paper of pre-war days who formed the backbone of our salvage groups during war-time, that horrid hoarder of bits and pieces of material who came to our rescue in the days of clothing coupons, that knitter who annoyed us by knitting at us in concert halls and in lectures, who clothed the feet of countless thousands of the army, navy and air force in the war years. The even more tiresome possessor of a camera and a snap album came into his own when the War Office demanded of all of us our continental holiday snapshots in the days of preparation for D-day. Even the most curious hobby has its glorious hour, and even the most curious hobby-merchant has the right to meet others of his kind when and where he can, and what better place could there be than the Public Library?

Again, we are constantly complaining that no-one ever takes any interest in current affairs, and current problems. Because of its very neutrality the library would be an ideal place for the organisation of either a series or single lectures on such matters. It would also be a good place in which to hold political forums. Already in certain boroughs, notably Malden, a whole series of lectures of this kind ranging from post-war housing to health education, from the Beveridge plan to religion, was part of an interesting experiment in introducing Youth Service to Library Service. This kind of lecture might very well be followed up by short courses, demonstrations and group work, which would enable those, who wished to do so, to learn more of the general subject introduced to them in one of the public lectures.

There seems no reason why the libraries could not be the convenient meeting place for small bodies of observers who could take part in simple historical or geological surveys, or



## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

who could compile meteorological records under the guidance of a few experts. One of the most maddening things about a crowded and busy life is the knowledge that much valuable material is wasted for sheer lack of time to arrange it properly. Many a genuine research worker is thwarted by the fact that he cannot get into touch with appropriate groups who would gladly help with small pieces of investigation. Many people have a definite talent for the keeping of records and for the collecting of material on various subjects, and love doing these painstaking jobs. The knowledge that their interest and their careful work would be of inestimable value to other students would be a great stimulus and encouragement.

The lunch-hour concerts held in the National Gallery during the war years were another experiment which could be imitated to a lesser extent in many public libraries. There is no reason why there could not be lunch-hour talks, as well as concerts, for the staffs of neighbouring firms, shops and factories. One of the great evils of dormitory living is that many people are totally cut off from any evening activity in their own area because of the distance they have to travel to and from work. Indeed many people are much too tired at the end of a working day to go out again to get their pennyworth of adult education. Moreover, there is a great deal to be said for getting it during the lunch hour, especially if it were held outside the factory or place of business, since in this way it would combine a change of scene with the mental stimulation which would carry many people through an afternoon of monotony.

Furthermore, many a library has facilities for the exhibition of pictures, models, and indeed anything exhibitable, which might well include the processes and products of many industries, not excluding the processes and products of the book world itself. There are many bookworms who would be all the better for realising what an alliance (or possibly armed neutrality would be a better term) exists between the author, illustrator, publisher and bookseller.

Finally, there are many libraries which could provide facilities for what one can only call a repertory cinema, that

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

is one which could confine itself to showing good films of instructional, artistic and educational interest long after they have gone out of circulation in the commercial cinema. Already numbers of such films are being produced for 16-mm. projectors, and a very lively film group might find its cultural home within the walls of a library. This is also true of radio discussion groups, play-reading societies and so on. Indeed the cultural activities which could be housed in and around a library are almost limitless in character and in kind.

Of course it is true that one would be up against many of the 'old school' librarians themselves, who would ask, more in sorrow than in anger, 'What has this to do with books?' But such activities centred in the library could hardly fail to stimulate what is after all its main function, the lending of books. Moreover, one field of endeavour above all is the duty, and indeed the province, of the library—to encourage book talks. People badly need guidance in the use and selection of books and as has been indicated already book talks on the classics, on new books, on new methods of book production, are all matters directly concerned with the lending of books.

Another very important reason for centring work of this kind in the library is that there are large numbers of both adolescents and adults who, while anxious to enlarge their interests and widen their experience, will never be attracted by the type of group, centre, guild, class or institute which demands from them a loyalty and allegiance, and often a standard of effort, which they consider themselves too adult to accept, or to which, owing to their nature as 'cats that walk by themselves', they are unable to contribute. The very popularity of the cinema is often due to the fact that people feel that there they are safe from being 'got at'. A cinema has one definite feature in common with a library, in that in neither does anyone ask you for a subscription, invite you to come to tea next Sunday or enquire if you are any better or worse for the book or film.

However much we may deplore this attitude as being anti-social, we must never forget that among these so-called antisocial people are numbered a very high proportion of

## THE APPROACH THROUGH THE EARS

those who are the salt of the earth. A visit to the reading room of any library, especially in the day-time, or in the later part of the evening, reveals a company of lonely souls, lonely often from choice, who sit in the news room, obviously resenting one another's presence, creating around themselves a sea of isolation, and disproving all the commonly accepted theories on human behaviour. Man is certainly a gregarious animal, but there are hosts of people at present uncatered for, whose desire is to lose their identity in a group of like-minded people, rather than to realise their identity and impose it on others. The development of the library service is one of the major methods of catering for the needs of society in such a fashion that further education shall no longer be an interesting but extraneous activity of the few, but an integrated way of life for the many.

But whether the first tentative approaches to informal education be made through the stomach, the feet, the work of one's hands, the eyes, the feelings or the ears, if the approach is brave enough and imaginative enough the response will come. All one can do is to help people to keep their minds receptive and then pour out to them all those varied interests which the limitless field of educational adventure affords. Only thus are people enabled to build up a set of values which, because it is of their own construction, will create in them not only the knowledge but the conviction that right is not right just because a community practises it, and that true progress is moral, not mechanical.

For the rest, if one can say with Blake:

*' I give you the end of a golden string;  
Only wind it into a ball,  
It will lead you in at Heaven's gate.  
Built in Jerusalem's wall'*

one has done one's part in providing all the equipment necessary for the great adventure of living the life of an educated man.



## USEFUL ADDRESSES

### DRAMA

British Drama League, 9 Fitzroy Square, London, W.1.

### FILMS

British Film Institute, 4 Great Russell Street, London, W.C.1.

### HEALTH AND PHYSICAL RECREATION

Central Council for Health Education, Tavistock House,  
Tavistock Square, London, W.C.1.

Central Council of Physical Recreation, 58 Victoria Street,  
London, S.W.1.

### MUSIC

Workers' Music Association, 9 Great Newport Street, Leicester  
Square, London, W.C.2.

### HOUSING AND PLANNING

The Housing Centre, 15 Suffolk Street, London, S.W.1.

Town & Country Planning Association, The Planning Centre,  
28 King Street, Covent Garden, London, W.C.2.

### READING

National Book League, 7 Albemarle Street, London, W.1.

### VISUAL EDUCATION, CURRENT AFFAIRS, ETC.

Council for Visual Education, 13 Suffolk Street, London,  
S.W.1.

British Institute of Adult Education, 29 Tavistock Square,  
London, W.C.1.

The Bureau of Current Affairs, Carnegie House, 117 Picca-  
dilly, London, W.1.

Association for Education in Citizenship (Discussion Group  
notes), 51 Tothill Street, London, S.W.1.

Council for Education in World Citizenship, 11 Maiden Lane,  
London, W.C.2.

National Association of Girls' Clubs & Mixed Clubs, Hamilton  
House, Bidborough Street, London, W.C.1. (Broadsheets  
and Pamphlets.)

Political & Economic Planning, (Broadsheets and Pamphlets),  
16 Queen Anne's Gate, London, S.W.1.



## USEFUL ADDRESSES

- Workers' Educational Association (Topics for discussion),  
38a St. George's Drive, London, S.W.1.
- Arts Council of Great Britain, 9 Belgrave Square, London,  
S.W.1.
- Victoria & Albert Museum (Posters, Books, Postcards),  
Cromwell Road, London, S.W.7.
- Pictorial Charts, 3 Harrington Road, London, S.W.7.
- The Electrical Association for Women (Charts, Films), 20  
Regent Street, London, S.W.1.
- British Broadcasting Corporation (Lists of Regional Educa-  
tion Officers), Broadcasting House, London, W.1.
- Howard League for Penal Reform, Parliament Mansions,  
Abbey Orchard Street, London, S.W.1.
- Oxford University Press, Amen House, London, E.C.4.  
(Pamphlets on Home Affairs.)

# INDEX

- A.B.C.A., 283, 284, 343  
 Aberfoyle, 114  
 Activity boxes, 194  
 Adoption of children, 61  
 Allen, Douglas, 321  
 America, 128, 366  
*And Quiet Flows the Don*, 358  
 Art, 205 *et seq.*  
 Art galleries, 196 *et seq.*  
 Aylmer, Felix, 242
- B.B.C., 31, 308 *et seq.*  
 Balloon debates, 333-334  
 Barnes, L. J., quoted, 68  
 Beerbohm, Max, quoted, 47  
 Bennett, Arnold, 350  
*Bible of the World. The*, 305-306  
 Birmingham, 58  
 Blackburn Catholic Youth Centre,  
     50, 55-56  
*Bluebird, The*, 265  
 Boating, 112-113  
 Boys' Brigade, 116  
 Bracy, Mr., 111  
 Bradford, 23  
 Brass bands, 297  
 Bridie, James, 305  
 Bristol, 23; Youth Service, 68  
 British Council, 23  
 British Council of the Churches, 306  
 British Drama League, 288  
 British Institute of Adult Education,  
     202, 309  
 British Restaurants, 54, 57-58, 60,  
     184, 189  
 British War Relief Society, 23  
 Broadsheets, 186  
 Brown, Ivor, quoted, 305  
 Browning, Miss, 360  
 Burnley, 23  
 Burt, Professor Cyril, 232  
 Butler, R. A., quoted, 63  
 Butlin's Camps, 128-9
- C.E.M.A., *see* Council of Arts  
 Cambridgeshire. Village Colleges  
     of, 27  
 Camping, 113 *et seq.*
- Cardiff, 58  
 Carnegie United Kingdom Trust,  
     289, 290  
 Cartoons, 186-189  
 Central Committee for Group  
     Listening, 316  
 Central Council for Physical Re-  
     creation, 97, 114  
 Central Institute of Art and Design,  
     204-205  
 Chalmers, Patrick, 362  
 Chicago, 195-196  
*Children's Charter*, 717  
 Christie, Agatha, 360  
*Christmas Dinner for a Soldier*, 245  
 Churchill, Winston, 20, 264-265;  
     quoted, 208  
 Cinemas, and education, 51-52,  
     221 *et seq.*; comfort in, 229;  
     and emotional education, 229-  
     231; and juvenile delinquency,  
     231-232; appreciation of, 235  
     *et seq.*; *see also* Films.
- Clark, Sir Kenneth, 198  
 Classical music, and snobbery, 292;  
     popularisation of, 298  
*Clock Watcher, The*, 338  
 Clubs, canteens of, 49-51, 54 *et seq.*;  
     licensed, 60-61; decoration of,  
     173 *et seq.*  
*Cluny Brown*, 358  
 Cole, D. E. H., 188  
 Collins, Wilkie, 358  
*Colour*, 248  
 Commission method of discussion,  
     332-333  
 Committee for Verse and Prose  
     recitation, 22-23  
 Committee work, 335 *et seq.*  
 Community Centres Association  
     Conferences, 125  
 Community singing, 299-300  
*Constant Nymph, The*, 246  
 Cookery, 54 *et seq.*  
 Coomaraswamy, Dr. Ananda K.,  
     quoted, 138  
 Co-operation and the crafts, 177-  
     188

## INDEX

- Co-operative Movement, 25  
 Cornwall, 212  
 Coulton, G. G., 321  
 Council of Arts, 198, 201-202, 289, 290  
 County Drama Organiser, 288  
 County Durham, 96  
 County libraries, 367  
 Courses of study, 29 *et seq.*  
 Coward, Noel, 244  
 Crafts and co-operative effort, 170 *et seq.*  
 Craftsmanship, pride in, 138-141  
 Creative instinct, the, 205 *et seq.*  
 Cressbrook, Community of, 135-136  
 Criticism, 336 *et seq.*  
 Culture and taste, 41-42  
 Cycling clubs, 112
- Daily Herald*, 355  
*Daily Mirror*, 350  
 Dancing, 95 *et seq.*, 295, 302-304  
 Dane, Clemence, 23  
 Darlington, 58  
*Dasha*, 358  
*Daylight on Saturday*, 359  
 Debates, 333  
 Denmark, 126  
 Devon Club Members' Council, 274  
*Diagnosis of our Times*, 343  
 Dickens, Monica, 358, 359  
 Dietetics, 53-54, 56-57  
 Discussion groups, 324 *et seq.*  
 Disney, Walt, 247  
 Dobson and Young, 38, 39, 289, 290, 301  
*Doll's House, The*, 267  
 Domestic Science, 21  
 Dramatics, 256 *et seq.*  
*Dumb and the Blind, The*, 266  
 Dundee, 240; Trade School, 49
- Educated man, definition of, 28  
 Education, and changing conditions, 11 *et seq.*, 20; limitations of, 20-21; methods of approach to, 22, 42 *et seq.*; suspicion of, 25-26; and entertainment, 36 *et seq.*; threefold policy required, 44  
 Education Act (1944), 26, 63, 67, 69, 86, 155  
 Eliot, T. S., 304, 305
- Emotional education, 229-231, 251 *et seq.*  
 Employment of Young Persons Act, 161  
 Ervine, St. John, 23  
*Escape*, 265  
 Evacuees, 62  
 Evening Institutes, 23, 55, 89-90  
 Exhibition boxes, 193-196
- Factory Act (1937), 161  
 Factory canteen concerts, 290-291  
*Family Reunion, The*, 266  
 Family ties, 61 *et seq.*  
*Fancy The*, 359  
 Film strips, 218-220  
 Films, documentary, 221-225; commercial, 225 *et seq.*; *see also* Cinemas  
 First Aid, informal education in, 33-35  
*For Whom the Bell Tolls*, 241  
 Forum method of discussion, 332  
*Frenchman's Creek*, 241  
*Frossia*, 358
- Gallup poll on adult education, 29  
 Gardening, 172  
*Gas Light*, 23  
 Geffryc Museum, 197-198  
 Germany, 58  
*Get Up and Sing*, 283  
*Ghosts*, 265  
*Good Companions, The*, 359  
 Gordon, Elizabeth, 15  
 Grammar schools, 67  
 Gramophones, 299  
*Great Adventure*, 135*n*, 319*n*  
*Great Swap, The*, 283  
 Grenfell, Joyce, 284-285, 322  
 Grierson, John, quoted, 214, 221  
*Guest in the House, The*, 246
- Hamlet*, 266  
 Harrison, Mrs., 198  
*Hasty Heart, The*, 266  
 Health education, 103 *et seq.*  
*Henry V*, 241-242  
 Heraclitus, quoted, 11  
 Herbert, A. P., 23  
 Hereford, 23  
 Hill, D. M., 359  
 Hilton, John, 318, 323

# INDEX

- Hoare, Sir Samuel, 166  
Holidays, 127 *et seq.*  
Holtby, Winifred, 244, 359  
Honesty, standards of, 117, 160-161  
Huntingdon, 23  
Hygiene, 99 *et seq.*, 120-121  
*I Lived in Grosvenor Square*, 248  
Illiteracy, 344-345  
Industry, and monotony, 139 *et seq.*;  
    training for, 142-144; and  
    education, 145 *et seq.*; and  
    juvenile labour, 155-156; initi-  
    ation into, 158-160  
Iona, 130  
Isotype Institute, 189  
*Jane Eyre*, 241, 359  
Jarrett, George, 88  
Jazz, 293 *et seq.*  
*Job in the North, A*, 359  
Job snobbery, 145 *et seq.*  
*John o' London's*, 356  
Johnson, Celia, 244  
Joyce, William, 168  
*Julius Caesar*, 242  
Juvenile delinquency, 88-89, 231-  
    232; labour, 150-151, 155-156  
Juvenile Employment Bureaux,  
    150-151  
Kendal, 132  
Kenyon Report, 368-369  
*Keys of the Kingdom, The*, 248  
*King Lear*, 266  
Kings Cross, 23  
*Ladies May Now Leave the Machines*,  
    359  
*Lady in the Dark*, 246  
Lambeth, 23  
Lancashire County Council, 27  
Lantern lectures, 214-218  
Law, studies in, 164 *et seq.*  
Lawson, Wilfrid, 242  
Lectures, and comfort, 35-36;  
    presentation of, 38 *et seq.*, 44  
Leeds, County Librarian of, 366  
Leicestershire Education Authority,  
    193  
Leisure, employment of, 14 *et seq.*  
*Letters of G. B. Shaw to Ellen Terry*,  
    359  
Libraries, public, 356, 364 *et seq.*  
*Lilliput*, 356  
*Life of Louis Pasteur, The*, 247  
Literature and religion, 305  
Lithographs, 202-204  
Living newspapers, 283-284  
Livingstone, Sir Richard, quoted,  
    11, 23  
Local Education Authorities, 25,  
    80-81, 86  
Logbooks, 199-201  
London City Literary Institute, 317  
London County Council posters, 45  
Lynn, Vera, 230, 318  
*Macbeth*, 242, 280-281  
McColvin, Stephen, 366  
Machine age, and leisure, 15 *et seq.*  
Mackenzie, Frances, 283  
*Madame Curie*, 247  
Malden, 372  
*Man in Half Moon Street, The*, 247  
Manchester, 23, 281  
Manners, 50-54, 97  
Mannheim, Professor, 343  
*Maria Marten*, 273  
*Marie Louise*, 248  
Masefield, John, 23  
Mead, Dr. Margaret, 140  
Meadon, Sir Percy, 27  
Meredith, Patrick, quoted, 214  
Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 223  
Middleton, C. H., 318  
Miming, 271-273  
Ministry of Information film ser-  
    vice, 222, 224  
*Mrs. Parkington*, 241  
*Moonstone, The*, 359  
Morley, Louise, 132  
Morris, William, 267, 306  
*Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, 360  
Museums, 196 *et seq.*  
Music, 60, 289 *et seq.*  
National Association of Girls' Clubs  
    and Mixed Clubs, 187, 193  
National Council of Women, 25  
National Gallery, 186, 198, 373  
Nesbitt, Kathleen, 242  
Neurath, Dr. Otto, 189  
*New Ventures in Broadcasting*, 309  
*Nine Tailors*, 359  
*None but the Lonely Heart*, 245

# INDEX

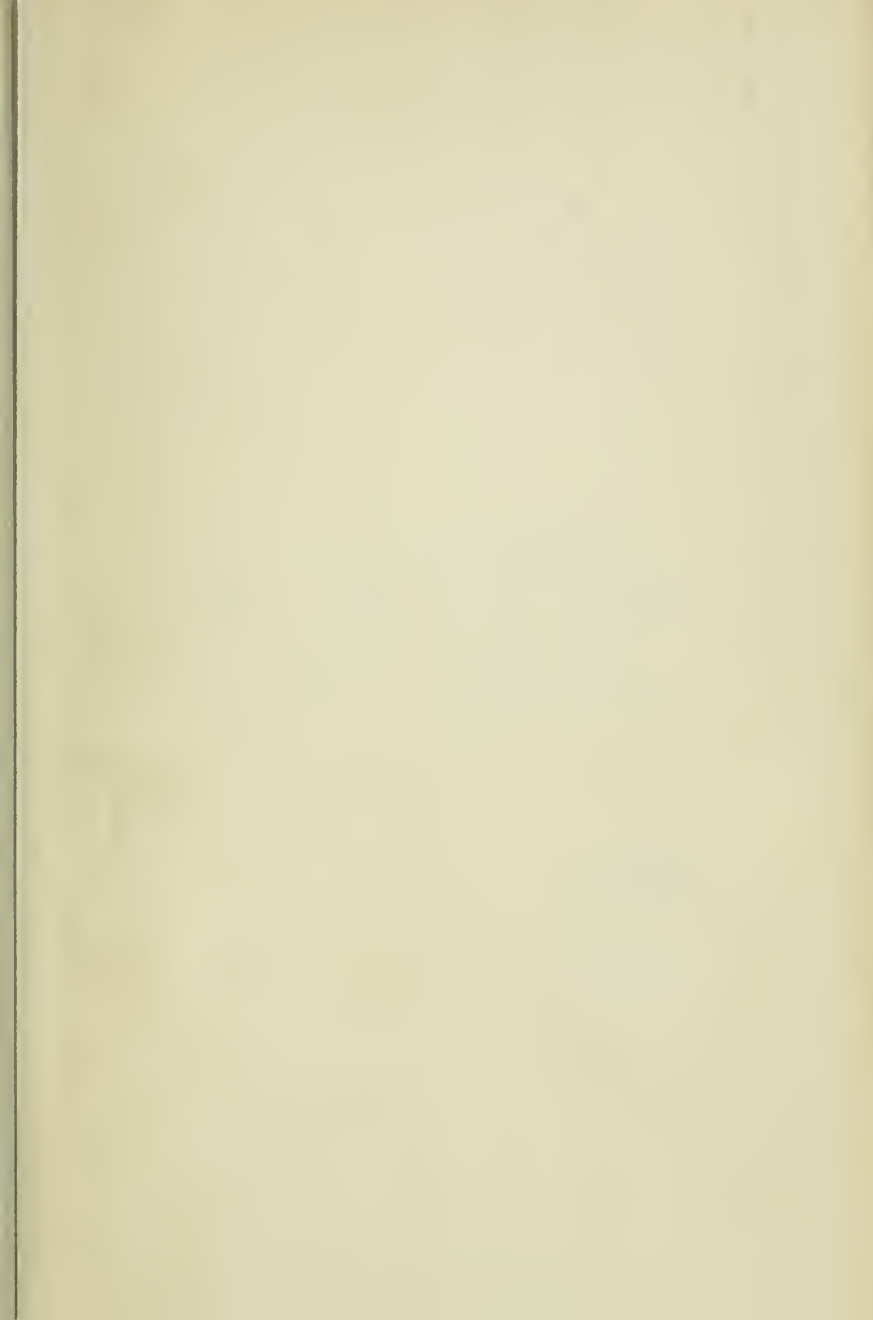
- Northern Ireland, 173  
 Norwich, 202, 212  
 Nottingham, 23, 58  
 Nursery schools, 47, 195
- Objective Burma*, 248  
 Odetts, Clifford, 283  
 Old Vic companies, 257  
 Oldham Report, 232  
*One Pair of Feet*, 358  
*One Pair of Hands*, 358  
 Oxford Education Authority, 114
- Painting, 205 *et seq.*  
 Pantomimes, 279-280  
 Parents, and education, 61 *et seq.*:  
     and medical treatment, 81 *et seq.*  
 Parents' Associations, 70 *et seq.*, 322, 371  
 Peckham Central School, 200-201  
 Penal reform, 164-166  
*Penicillin*, 247  
 Personal relationships, 97 *et seq.*  
 Peterborough, 211-212  
*Picture Post*, 356  
 Pilkington, Dr., 217  
*Platform Six*, 283  
 Play centres, 62  
 Plays, selection of, 259 *et seq.*; reading of, 269, 285 *et seq.*; making of, 273 *et seq.*  
 Poplar, 23  
 Posters, 183 *et seq.*  
*Prelude to War*, 243  
 Priestley, J. B., 318, 359  
 Psychologists, amateur, 252-253  
 Public Houses, 22-23, 59-60  
 Public libraries, 356, 364 *et seq.*  
 Puppetry, 273
- Radio, talks, 284-285; listening to, 308 *et seq.*  
 Radio Doctor, 309-310, 318  
*Raiding Berlin*, 248  
 Rambling societies, 110-111  
*Random Harvest*, 241  
 Rank, A. J., 223  
 Rawnsley, Lieut. Commander, 188  
 Reading, 300  
 Reading, mechanics of, 346-348; methods of, 347 *et seq.*
- Religion, 301 *et seq.*  
*Report on the Cinema and the Adolescent*, 51  
 Residential courses, 124 *et seq.*  
 Rhythm, 302  
 Risca, Oxford House Club at, 279  
 Rock climbing, 113  
*Rodin*, 247  
 Rossetti, Dante Gabriel, 306  
 Rotarians, 25  
 Rural Community Council, 27  
 Russia, 114, 131, 189, 193, 338, 358, 366
- Sadlers Wells companies, 257  
 St. Just Youth Club, 212  
 St. Pancras, 370  
 San Francisco Parental School, 88-89  
 Sayers, Dorothy, 304, 305, 359  
 Scandinavian adult education, 126  
 Scenery, 110  
 Scholars and ordinary people, 21, 24  
 School Dental Service, 82  
 School leaving age, 13, 78  
 School meals, 47-49, 79 *et seq.*  
 School Medical Services, 79 *et seq.*  
 Scottish Education Department, 114  
 Secondary education, 67, 69-70, 77-78, 150-151  
 Sex education, 81, 97  
 Shakespeare, William, 23, 363-364  
 Shaw, G. B., 23; quoted, 337, 357  
*She Stoops to Conquer*, 23  
 Shops Act, 155, 161  
 Simon, A. P., 190, 191  
 Simon, Sir Ernest, 188  
 Skating, 113  
*Skin of our Teeth*, 283  
 Sleeping arrangements in camp, 117-120  
 Social sense, 50-54, 97  
*Song of Bernadette*, 248  
*South Riding*, 244, 359  
 Speech training, 263-265, 327 *et seq.*  
 Sport, 26-27  
*Spreading the News*, 355  
 Stead, Dr., 46  
*Steel*, 247  
 Stein, Gertrude, quoted, 253  
*Street of Adventure, The*, 355  
 Sweden, 126  
 Swinburne, quoted, 265



# INDEX

- Teachers, authority of, 63; and parents, 64 *et seq.*
- Technical colleges, 23, 24
- Tempest, The*, 265
- Tenants' Associations, 111
- They Came to a City*, 243-244
- This Happy Breed*, 231, 244-245
- Three Sisters, The*, 265
- Thunder Rock*, 266
- Time and the Conways*, 265
- Times Educational Supplement, 69n
- 'To Start You Talking,' 321
- Townswomen's Guilds, 25, 111
- Trade Union Movement, 25
- Treasure Island*, 266, 359
- Tree Grows in Brooklyn, A*, 245
- Trevelyan, G. M., quoted, 11
- True Glory, The*, 248
- University education, 24
- University Extension Lectures, 18, 22, 23
- Verse, 360 *et seq.*
- Victoria and Albert Museum, 186, 214
- Village Colleges of Cambridgeshire, 27
- Visual education, 181 *et seq.*, 214 *et seq.*
- Vocational education, 145 *et seq.*
- Waiting for Lefty*, 283
- Wales, 130, 300
- Wall newspapers, 189-192
- Warwickshire, 360, 363
- Washing amenities in camp, 120-121
- Waterloo Road*, 245
- Watson, John, 161
- Way Ahead, The*, 245
- Way to the Stars, The*, 248
- Wayne, Jennifer, 169, 284
- Webb, Sidney, 350
- Week-ends, educational, 131 *et seq.*
- West of England Joint Committee on Adult Education, 335
- Westmorland, 135, 279, 328
- Where do we go from here?*, 284
- Wilder, Thornton, 283
- Wind of Heaven, The*, 305
- Winn, Cyril, 300
- Women's Institutes, 25, 89, 111
- Worcester, 58
- Word games, 270-271
- Workers' Educational Association, 18, 22-25, 204, 343
- Wynyard, Diana, 263
- Y.W.C.A., 211
- Young Farmers' Clubs, 157-158, 279
- Youth organisations, 68-69, 78-79
- Youth Service Volunteers, 111, 130







PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE  
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET

---

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY

---

H&SS  
A  
870



UTL AT DOWNSVIEW



D RANGE BAY SHLF POS ITEM C  
39 09 10 03 10 012 4